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Trump says Iran will 'no longer exist' if US is 'forced' to resume war, accusing Tehran of violating truce. On 3rd day of retaliatory strikes, Iran attacks US bases in Kuwait and Bahrain, P 11

Helicopter operated by Saudi Aramco crashes in energy heartland of Ras Tanura, killing all 14 on board, all Saudis. Authorities probing the cause of the accident, P 11

33 people rescued so far this weekend after Venezuela's twin earthquakes, says interim president Delcy Rodriguez. Tens of thousands remain unaccounted for, while time for finding survivors runs out, P 11

England Test captain Ben Stokes makes stunning retirement announcement during Test against New Zealand, bringing curtains down on a career that included 2019 WC triumph and one of the most celebrated Ashes innings the same year, P 14

6 faint at RGUHS meet; V-P, CM say B'luru is 'AC city'

Six students attending RGHUS open-air meeting against drugs in Bengaluru on Sunday fainted due to the noon heat and were carried away by volunteers. Urging students to stay put in their allotted seats, Karnataka CM **DK Shivakumar** and Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan said in tandem that Bengaluru is the 'most air-conditioned city in the world' and climate is 'automatically controlled by god'. P 3

Border tribe alleges Chinese land grab

A tribal community living along Arunachal Pradesh's frontier with China has alleged that the People's Liberation Army of China has occupied large parts of its ancestral grazing, hunting and farming land in Upper Subansiri district. P 6

4 fined for driving into Ladakh lake

Four tourists have been fined Rs 2 lakh for off-roading in Ladakh's Pangong Lake and other protected wildlife areas in the UT's first such punitive action. Four vehicles used in the trips were also impounded. P 12

MLAs, mins to appear before Akal Takht

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, who has been facing the ire of Sikh clergy over a controversial video, said Sikh MLAs & ministers will appear before Akal Takht Monday to present govt's stance on new anti-sacrilege law. P 12

Police raid homes of 8 temple fraud accused

Track Bank A/Cs, Lockers, Land Deals, I-T Filings

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PTI

Police officials at the residence of a relative of Ram Shankar Yadav, a key conspirator in the Ayodhya temple donation scam, on Sunday

Lucknow: UP police searched Sunday homes of eight men arrested in alleged theft, misappropriation and embezzlement of cash and valuables donated to Ram temple in Ayodhya, tracking the money trail to check if siphoned offerings were converted into properties or other wealth.

Eight police teams began coordinated searches around 7am and spent nearly eight hours examining homes across the district while revenue officials verified property records and assets. "Searches were carried out as part of investigation to gather evidence," a police officer said, adding investigators sought to establish whether the accused amassed wealth beyond known sources of income after joining Ram temple donation counting operations. All eight accused are in judicial custody and will be produced before court Monday.

Investigators are tracing movable and immovable assets of the accused, land registrations, bank accounts, investments, lockers, and income tax filings. Around Rs 80 lakh has already been seized.

▶ Key conspirators, P 12

MEA rejects Pak claim of India's hand in Karachi attack

New Delhi: India has slammed Pakistan for alleging Indian involvement in an attack on a military base in Karachi on Saturday, saying Pakistan needs to look inwards and dismantle terror infrastructure on its territory.

Four paramilitary personnel were killed in a terrorist attack on a Sindh Rangers compound in Karachi Saturday night.

It was the city's first major terrorist strike since Oct 2024. Pakistani security forces killed six terrorists and captured one alive. In Karachi on Saturday, PM Shehbaz Sharif accused India of using "proxies" to undermine peace and stability in Pakistan.

Ministry of external affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal rejected the allegations as "baseless". TNN

During PM's visit, India & Seychelles ink pact for extradition, 8 others

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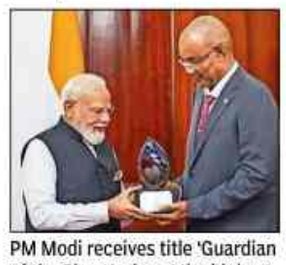

PM Modi receives title 'Guardian of the Blue Horizon,' the highest civilian honour of Seychelles, from President Patrick Herminie

India and Seychelles signed nine agreements, including an extradition treaty to combat transnational crime, as PM Modi held bilateral talks with President Patrick Herminie, saying India's vision is to turn Indian Ocean into an ocean of opportunity and that both countries stood for more inclusive development.

At Seychelles' National Assembly, Modi underscored the "shared values of democracy, rule of law and people-centric governance that guide the two countries". Modi sought fair, responsible and equitable climate action as he stressed that the Global South, especially island nations, was bearing the brunt of climate change.

Maritime security, development cooperation, clean energy, health, crime prevention and people-to-people ties dominated the agenda with the President appreciating India's special economic package of $175 million, comprising $125 million in a rupee-denominated line of credit and $50 million in grant assistance, to support priority projects.

▶ Line of credit, P 12

I don't fear death, will return to Bangladesh this year: Hasina

Dhaka: Former PM **Sheikh Hasina** — living in India since her govt's ouster in 2024 — has said she plans to return to Bangladesh "later this year" and said "I do not fear death". Her rivals termed her remarks "a tactic to exert pressure" in a bid to disrupt the current political situation in the country, **reports Ahsan Tasnim.**

Her remarks also come at a time when political circles in Dhaka are abuzz with reports of a resurgence of her banned Awami League in both rural and urban areas — a perceived revival that prompted the Tarique Rahman govt to allow its members to contest local polls, albeit only as independent candidates.

▶ 'Lost my family', P 11

KBG segment gets biggest slice of ₹2,000cr infra pie

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Bengaluru: Byatarayanapura, represented by Bengaluru development minister Krishna Byre Gowda (KBG), has emerged as the biggest beneficiary of Karnataka's Rs 2,000-crore Bengaluru infrastructure package, with sanctioned works worth Rs 88.5 crore.

Soon after taking oath as CM, DK Shivakumar allocated Rs 2,000 crore for Bengaluru. After a few weeks, Gowda announced the money will be allocated to take up asphalting of ward roads & other infra works.

A scrutiny of the govt order reveals a striking contrast. While Byatarayanapura tops the list, KR Pura and Mahadevapura constituencies in Bengaluru East City Corporation — home to some of the city's highest taxpayers, technology parks and fastest-growing neighbourhoods — got Rs 60 cr & Rs 50 crore, respectively.

IT ZONES GET LESS

- **Byatarayanapura,** minister Krishna Byre Gowda's constituency, gets **₹88.5cr infra funds**
- Shivajinagar (₹80cr), Gandhinagar (₹73cr), Chamarajpet (₹71.5cr), KR Puram (₹60cr), Bommanahalli (₹60cr)

▶ Highest allocations, P 4

In 10 TN dists, cops colour-code 15k sex offenders by risk

Madurai: TN Police is classifying 15,000-odd alleged sex offenders awaiting trial or out on bail across 10 southern districts into eight colour-coded risk categories as part of a new surveillance strategy called Spectrum, **reports Ram Sundaram.**

The system assigns red to prior convicts and suspects in most serious crimes like gang rape and assault on minors, with teams assigned to track them via biometrics and phone surveillance. Orange covers repeat offenders with cases of molestation, stalking & harassment against them.

▶ 1,500 sexual crimes, P 12

Persistent eyes German firm Nagarro for $1.3 bn

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Bengaluru: In what could be one of the largest cross-border acquisitions by an Indian IT services company, Persistent Systems has launched an all-cash bid to acquire Germany's Nagarro for $1.3 billion. This transaction could create a $2.9-billion digital engineering and AI powerhouse with over 46,000 employees.

Persistent has offered €81 a share for Nagarro, representing a 140% premium to the stock's closing price on June 25 and a 94% premium to its 3-month volume-weighted average price. The transaction is expected to close by March 2027, after which the combined entity will operate as the Persistent-Nagarro Group.

LUFTHANSA, SIEMENS NAGARRO'S CLIENTS

- Acquisition would make Persistent **7th largest Indian IT services firm** by revenue
- **Nagarro's key customers** include Siemens, Lufthansa, **BMW, Maruti Suzuki**
- Through acquisition, **Persistent seeks to gain scale,** expand European footprint, deepen digital engineering & AI capabilities

▶ Seventh largest firm, P 9

2 auto drivers, 1 dream: Making of India's new long jump queen

Vishal Menon & Arnab Seal

Kochi/Bhubaneswar: When Ancy Sojan overhauled a 22-year-old national record in women's long jump on Saturday, it shook awake Nattika, a fishing hamlet in Kerala's Thrissur.

Some 2,000km away from the sand pit in Bhubaneswar where she had landed with 6.88m, two local auto drivers vicariously fulfilled their sporting dreams as Kerala legend Anju Bobby George's long-standing record disappeared into the sand. Anju's 6.83m was set at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

One was Ancy's father, Sojan ET. The other, her childhood coach Sanoj VV — "Kannan Mash" to all in Nattika. Neither man made it beyond the district level as athletes. On Saturday, they found redemption through Ancy's majestic leap.

Ancy Sojan, second from left, poses with her family in Kerala

▶ 'Can breach 7m', P 14

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Bangalore Times

'I was very lonely'

Hollywood bets big on microdramas

Short, dramatic & viral!

Love stories come naturally to me, but this film demanded deeper research: Suri

How the World Cup is bringing the squad back together

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DANCING TO ALGO TUNES

After group origami, reading, painting, singing & other activities, Bengalureans are now getting together to shake a leg, thanks to viral reels

Bengaluru seems to be swept up in a dance storm unleashed by viral choreographies on social media. So much so that dance lovers, even the untrained ones, are signing up to perfect their steps. Walk into a dance studio over a weekend, or sometimes even a weekday, for a workshop, and you'd see a crowd packed in the space, all dressed up with makeup on, patiently waiting for the choreographer to walk in.

People across age groups — those as young as three, to sexagenarians — travel from afar with friends and family, grabbing spots on the dance floor to learn the hook steps of the latest or popular track that they've seen multiple times on social media. These workshops, two- to three-hours long and usually priced over Rs 800, get sold out as soon as they're listed.

They are transforming the city's dance scene, best known for its classical as well as fusion performances and Christmas waltzes, to pivot to hyper-short, reel-focused content.

Recent months have seen some of India's most-followed dance creators — including Noel Alexander, Team Naach, Abhi Badarshahi, Mohan Pandey, Shazeb Sheikh, Heet Samani and Eshna Kutty—bring sold-out workshops to Bengaluru's dance studios.

WHY DANCE WORKSHOPS ARE A HIT

Bengaluru studios organise five to eight workshops each day on the weekend and see participation of over 40 people per class, which doubles if the choreographer is a prominent figure.

Snigdha Rawat, a 27-year-old campus recruiter from Jabalpur, says the city's weekend workshops are the reason why she is still in Bengaluru. Rawat, who started with semi-classical dance workshop by Kumar Iyer in 2022, is now a regular at Bhangra, hip-hop and contemporary workshops too. "After a whole week of working 9 to 6, dance is like a stress buster," she says.

These workshops are a hybrid of classroom, fan meet and content studio. Learning is organised around one-minute viral routines rather than months of structured training, reflecting how social media algorithms, creator culture and the desire for offline experiences are reshaping dance training.

> I've learned a lot of fashion trends from these dancers; they are really inspiring. I never knew I would've ever danced with a lungi or panche on
>
> SHASHANK | SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

Janhvi Sharma, founder of Good Move Studio space, Koramangala, attributes the trend of workshops to people wanting offline activities to break the monotony of their lives after Covid-19. "People wanted to learn and experience choreographies in person with the instructor. They truly enjoy the offline classes," she says.

Choreographer Abhi Badarshahi says dance workshops are always sold-out because working professionals who danced during their college or school days are finding it more convenient to attend sessions for short periods of time after work, learn a particular piece, and enjoy it.

During his first visit to Bengaluru, Abhi says he was so moved when a student asked for an autograph and not a selfie. "I have a photo of it saved in my gallery. That's a special memory."

VIRAL STEPS, STAR CHOREOGRAPHERS

Dance Inn Studios manager Christina Angam, 22, admits that since there's too much to learn, many enrol for workshops to enjoy, meet and dance with the choreographer. "But yes, a lot of people come to make reels. Also, in a workshop of two to three hours, it's not easy to learn the whole choreography."

Janhvi says a lot of the participants, who follow the choreographers, learn the steps beforehand and come because they really want to shoot a video with the instructors. "That's a separate focus area."

Sometimes, they even cry if they don't get a good video, says Abhi, known for choreographies of songs like Piyu Bole, Saudebaazi and Shauq. "We push our best to make people realise that it's about enjoying the process and video is just a part of it. They can of course record and upload on their profile for their satisfaction, but focus should be on the vibe, enjoying music, dancing and each other's company."

Snigdha is a regular at Twist Turn, DNA, Playpen and Dhuri studios. She regularly posts videos on social media and says she feels happy when her friends appreciate her for learning the viral choreographies. She also regularly checks for engagement on her posts. "When Noel, who rarely reposts, reshared one of my reels on his story, it was definitely one of the happiest moments in my dance journey. A part of my dance also showed up in the compilation video posted by Team Naach for their Japan tour, which felt like a big achievement," says Snigdha.

> I feel there is no harm in this one-minute reel approach because that is the only thing you can learn in an hour or two. A reel makes you feel that you have completed a process. It helps us have a structure in our minds
>
> KHUSHBU GUPTA | TEACHER TRAINER

9-year-old Devanshi Biswal's (above) mom says even for participation in reality shows, organisers would first see the social media following

The trend is impacting the artists' work in a different way — they need to keep the frame in mind for the vertical mobile screens while choreographing a song. "Format and frame are on my mind as we have to keep up with the trend and market. But I also add my own elements into my choreography. I give a little consideration to the people. It is not strictly for the reels, but to ensure that people learn and pick up the choreography in two hours," says Abhi.

NON-DANCERS SIGN UP

The workshops are designed in such a way that it can cater to dancers and non-dancers alike. Khushbu Gupta, a 43-year-old teacher-trainer, started attending workshops after the pandemic, in 2023. She says though her ultimate motive is not to attend workshops for recording reels, she does post videos she has recorded at the workshops on Instagram for her sheer love for dancing. She finds them fulfilling. She has attended the workshop for Kaantha by Noel and others. "Sometimes, when you see these dances on Instagram, you feel you need somebody to teach you those steps. I also wanted to dance and be around like-minded people. So when I find something interesting, I go. Currently, the Bhangra workshop is something which I am attending mostly every alternate week."

> A three-hour workshop to learn one minute of the song can be an information overload and physically taxing
>
> MAHALAKSHMI SHANMUGAM | SOFTWARE PROFESSIONAL

EVERYONE'S AT ALGORITHMS' MERCY

Ipsita Parida, mother of 9-year-old Devanshi Biswal, says she started handling the social media account of her child even more seriously after some of her dance reels went viral. Ipsita actively tries to promote Devanshi's posts and reels, and there's a reason for that — the world takes algorithms quite seriously. "Even for participation in reality shows, the organisers see the social media following," she says.

"I post, I comment and add caption. I check the engagement on the posts. But unfortunately, the algorithm has changed. Despite her videos being reposted by some prominent choreographers, they don't get much reach, compared to the content of kids in Mumbai or Delhi dancing to Bollywood songs."

Mumbai-based Hitanshi Sheth, 15, has attended Kaantha workshop in Pune. "Once I posted the reel, I got great engagement — 21.2k views on that reel alone. I don't even have 10k followers, so I have a lesser reach compared to other influencers. But for a particular song, if it's trending and famous to the point that every other person knows it, putting those keywords and hashtags and tagging those people get more engagement compared to other songs."

Hitanshi attends workshops in other cities too. She has attended workshops in Pune, Delhi and Hyderabad while on holiday. "I did Vikas Sawant's Sapno ki Rani in Delhi. I love dancing, and if I have gotten attached to a choreography or loved a choreography and haven't been able to attend it in Mumbai, I will look forward to attending that workshop elsewhere," says Hitanshi, who is trained in Kathak. She attends them sometimes with her 44-year-old mother Shraddha Shah, a school teacher trained in Bharatanatyam, and the duo upload content together.

DANCE VIBES MATCH STYLE QUOTIENT

Techie Shashank, 26, wanted a break from his corporate life and started attending dance workshops about two years ago. For him, styling up a little and standing out at these workshops are as important as the dance moves. "I think of what I have to wear, and I'll try to mix and match with whatever I have. Sometimes, I buy things, say shoes, for the next workshop," he says.

"I've learned a lot of good fashion trends from these dancers; they are really inspiring. I never knew I would have ever danced with a lungi or panche on," says Shashank, a trained classical dancer.

Mahalakshmi Shanmugam, a 38-year-old software professional, recalls how everyone had dressed up in sarees and gowns for the Chitta Kukkad workshop by Team Naach. "It was a whole vibe. It's nice to see people dress up for such events," says Mahalakshmi, who prefers regular classes to workshops.

> The trend of dance workshops has gone viral because working professionals who danced during their college or school days are finding it more convenient to attend sessions for short periods of time after work, learn a particular piece, and enjoy it
>
> ABHI BADARSHAHI | CHOREOGRAPHER

She does attend workshops by Team Naach, Eshna Kutty and other choreographers she follows, as they give a break from her routine, but she feels three-hour workshop to learn one minute of the song can be an information overload and physically taxing. "But also, sometimes that's the only way you get to learn from the big shots," she quips.

A fort, military outpost and now an air hub

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STREET VIEW

Those flying into Bengaluru and landing at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) cannot possibly miss the imposing statue of Kempegowda I, the 16th century ruler who laid out the very first planned version of the city.

The majestic statue is as much a tribute to the founding father as it is to the very location that hosts the airport – Devanahalli. For, Kempegowda I belonged to the Morasu Wokkalu community, who first built the settlement that came to be known as Devanadoddi and eventually became Devanahalli.

A mud fort was built here in the early 16th century by local chieftains. Its proximity to Nandi Hills — another historically significant high-ground fortress — enhanced Devanahalli's strategic value as part of a network of defensive locations guarding the Mysore plateau.

It passed through the hands of the Mysuru Wadiyars, Hydar Ali and Tipu Sultan, eventually to the British. It was Hyder Ali who identified its military significance and fortified it in the 18th century. Tipu Sultan was born at the fort in 1751.

Centuries on, the fort continues to draw both casual tourists and serious history buffs. Long before it became an aviation hub, Devanahalli was known for its cluster of ancient temples, including the Venugopalaswamy Temple within the fort — showcasing Dravidian architecture and intricate carvings.

Unlike many historical forts that lie abandoned, Devanahalli Fort remains lived-in, with houses, shops, and temples coexisting within its walls — a rare continuity of urban life inside a heritage site.

Tipu renamed Devanahalli as Yousafabad— "the abode of the finest man." The name, however, never caught on, and the original identity endured. Tipu lost control over the fort in 1791 during the Third Anglo-Mysore war and Devanahalli lost its significance as a military outpost. It remained an agrarian town and its most famous produce is the Devanahalli chakota (pomelo) known for its unusually sweet flavour.

Some say the best fruits of the season used to be sent to the Mysore royal family every year. Now GI-tagged, you can find chakota being sold on the Devanahalli main road.

The Bangalore Blue grape is also cultivated extensively here.

The opening of KIA in 2008 transformed Devanahalli into a major entry point to the city, triggering rapid urbanisation. The nearby Aerospace SEZ and Hardware Park are aimed at making Devanahalli a manufacturing and innovation hub, hosting global aerospace and electronics firms. Although these large-scale projects dominate headlines, a significant section of Devanahalli's population still depends on agriculture.

The town's traditional santhe (weekly market) continues to thrive and is a living window into its rural past.

HOW DEVADASIS built their own bank

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BREAK FREE: Devadasi Mahila Sahakar Sangha Niyamit helps devadasis access credit to start businesses, invest in agriculture and educate their children

Kattnemma was barely an adult when her family made her a devadasi — the practice of giving away unmarried girls to temple services, which ultimately pushed them into a lifetime of vulnerability and exploitation. With no source of income or family support, a lot of them were forced into relationships with rich local patrons, and many ended up becoming unwed mothers.

The story of Kattnemma, from the remote Chilghod village in Vijayanagar district of Karnataka, was no different. When the youthful days were behind her, and the state govt started cracking down on the regressive practice, the patron vanished from her life. Kattnemma, who by then had two daughters, started working as a woodcutter, earning a meagre daily wage. Her life still steeped in penury, Kattnemma wished to start a business on her own. When she turned to the formal banking system to raise a loan, they couldn't help her because like other devadasis, Kattnemma didn't own any land or assets.

A hand that gives

Her search for financial assistance to set up her small business ended at the doors of the Devadasi Mahila Sahakar Sangha Niyamit, a cooperative society launched by devadasi women in Hagaribommanahalli in Vijayanagar in 2019. The Sangha's goal is to put an end to the financial exclusion of devadasi women by giving them access to credit. "I'm very thankful to the Sangha. As a first instalment, I got Rs 10,000 to start the cloth business," says Kattnemma. "When I repaid it, they increased the loan amount." Now, financially independent, Kattnemma has finally broken the chain of servitude.

Seven years since its launch, the Sangha has helped several devadasis across the undivided Ballari district access loans without collateral to start businesses, invest in agriculture, build homes and educate their children.

FROM MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM

THE BAN: Karnataka banned devadasi system by implementing the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982, and Rules, 1987, and followed it up with the implementation of the Rules in 1988. The more comprehensive Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2025 is a landmark piece of legislation currently pending Presidential assent

IN NUMBERS: As per 2025-06 survey, there are 23,360 devadasi women in Karnataka; the 2007-08 survey had pegged their numbers at 46,660

ASSISTANCE: Officials say devadasis get a govt monthly pension of ₹2,000. Devadasis are also entitled to an assistance of up to ₹2 lakh to build houses under the Rajiv Gandhi housing scheme, financial help or a subsidy of ₹30,000 for skill-based businesses, ₹3 lakh and ₹5 lakh for the marriage of their sons and daughters, respectively

Running only on trust

The Sangha, which charges a monthly interest of 80 paise for Rs 100, has over 500 devadasi women as members. All of its members, except founder-president B Malamma, are a devadasi.

Malamma, who has been working among the community for over two decades, is also the general secretary of Karnataka State Devadasi Vimochana Organisation. During her years of working with devadasis, she witnessed countless instances of injustice — sexual exploitation, physical abuse and bonded labour — often triggered by unpaid debts owed to wealthy landlords and moneylenders. "Women who default on loans as small as Rs 10,000 are often harassed, forced into bonded labour and, in some cases, sexually exploited. Even their children and grandchildren are made to work to repay the debt. Some families are socially boycotted," she says.

To break this cycle, Malamma and a group of financial experts decided to establish a cooperative that functions like a bank for devadasis. After mobilising women across Hagaribommanahalli and neighbouring taluks, they registered the Sangha under the Cooperative Societies Act.

The cooperative collects a one-time life membership fee of Rs 2,220 and issues identity cards to members. It has built an initial corpus of Rs 6 lakh through the membership drive.

The funds are used to provide affordable loans to devadasi families. The Sangha will lend Rs 10,000 for the first time. After going through their repayment capacity and checking utilisation of the loan, the Sangha will increase the loan amount gradually.

Loans are extended to help women become economically self-reliant by starting small businesses such as cloth and grocery shops, cattle rearing, sheep breeding and goat farming. Financial assistance is also provided for children's education, marriages and agricultural activities. The Sangha maintains a healthy recovery rate of 95-98%, with only 1-5% of borrowers defaulting.

Unlike conventional lenders, the Sangha does not insist on property documents or collateral. "We operate on trust and mutual understanding. Most members repay their loans sincerely," says Malamma.

C Boregowda, CDPO of the Karnataka women and child development department, says the formation of the Sangha is a milestone achievement for the devadasi community. "They decided to help each other financially, and so they created a fund using their own resources without depending on others, took help, ran businesses and became economically independent. This is true empowerment."

BEST OF OORU

SUBODH SANKAR is the co-founder of Atta Galatta, one of Bengaluru's best-known independent bookstores and literary community spaces. He launched it with his wife Lakshmi in 2012. Subodh is also the co-founder of Bengaluru Poetry Festival

What role did Bengaluru play in shaping your journey from being a software engineer to the co-founder of Atta Galatta?

Bengaluru is home, the city I have lived in the longest, the city that shaped my career, the city where our daughter grew up, the city that gave us most of what we have today, the city that supported Lakshmi and my dream of running a bookstore, the city that gave us an extended family, the city that included us into the world of arts and literature, the city that has allowed us to dream and follow that dream.

When we started our journey with Atta Galatta, as a bookstore that specialises in Indian Writing, we counted on the fact that Bengaluru as a major cosmopolitan city would have a population from all over India, that would look for writing in their own language. What we got, was much more; the sheer diversity in interests, the enthusiasm with which Bengalureans pursue these interests and the passion they bring to the table have been not just an inspiration but also the sustaining life force behind our initiative.

Your favourite Bengaluru café that isn't famous enough?

Srirangam Café in Indiranagar, not as known as its 'cousin' with a similar name inspired by a temple town, is an absolute gem. Their mini vadas are addictive and our new Sunday dinner tradition has turned into an indulgence into their 'podi' idly and various rice 'bhaths' ('kesari bhath' with a special callout)!

One thing Bengaluru gets unfairly criticised for, and one praise it absolutely deserves?

Traffic in Bengaluru is bad, and deserves some criticism, but it pains me when this city seems to be judged poorly as a traffic city. I find most major cities this size in India have similar problems, but Bengaluru gets more than an unfair share of this criticism.

In my observation, Bengaluru as a city supports and patronises ideas like no other. Whether it is a startup idea, a creative idea or ideas of any other kind, Bengaluru has a gentle generosity of spirit with which she embraces and supports these ideas. It is no surprise to me that this spirit is what keeps Bengaluru at the forefront of various types of innovation.

Your favourite walk in the city?

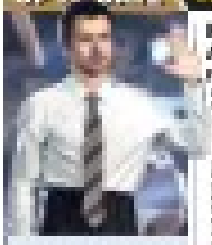
I love walking the streets of our neighbourhood. It's got history, charm and personality. From centuries old temples and hero stones, to architecture of every kind, a beautiful canopy of old trees, and a never-ending source of people watching, Indiranagar continues to charm, engage and keep me fit!

One Bengaluru author everyone should read?

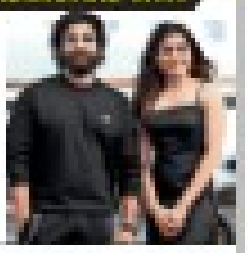
Shinie Antony gets more attention as the director of the Bangalore Literature Festival and the Bengaluru Poetry Festival. She's an award winning writer, one of the most respected editors in the country, and has a wicked sense of humour to boot.

Her work spans literary styles — she's written full-length novels, novellas, poetry, short stories and regularly fills newspaper columns, in addition to compiling and editing anthologies. Her recent novella "Cant" is one of my most favourite reads – a plot that comes out of left field, a tight, gripping narrative and a surprise twist with the ending, which, in my opinion, is almost her signature. Her novel "Eden Abandoned: The Story of Lilith" takes a lesser known Biblical figure, and gives it a modern feminist sensibility, which makes it read almost like a work of high fantasy – not something too many authors can pull off with panache.

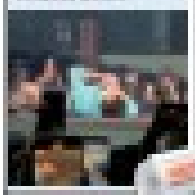
UP TO DATE | WHAT'S #TRENDING AND WHY

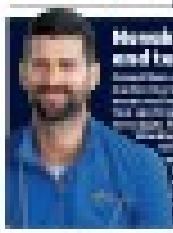


Rashmika and Allu Arjun to reunite in Sooke



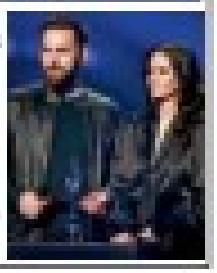
Harry Styles sparks concern after collapsing on stage amid UK heat wave





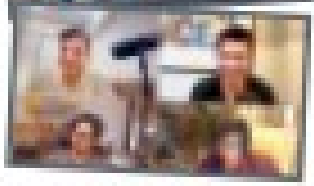
Hassle hopes to play cricket and tennis with Virat one day

Courteney Cox and Johnny McDaid split after more than a decade together

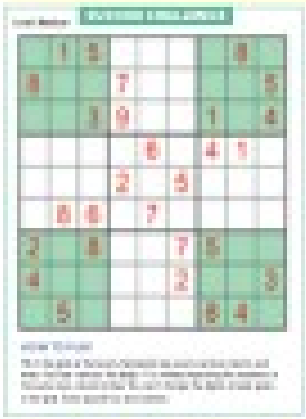


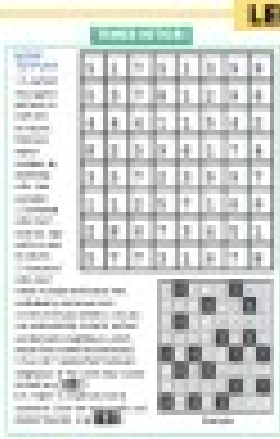
The age of the unscripted celebrity

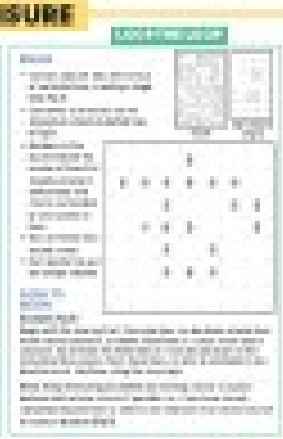
POV

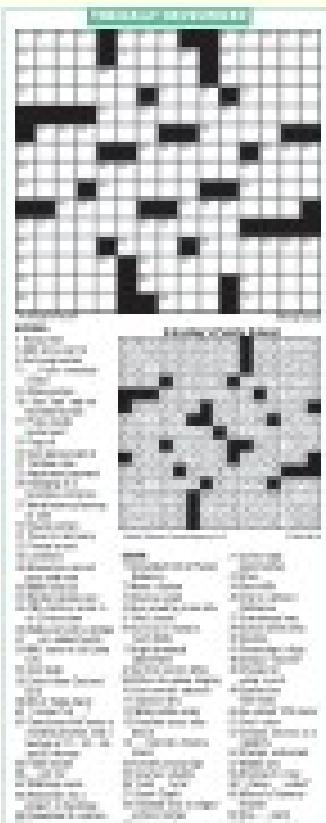


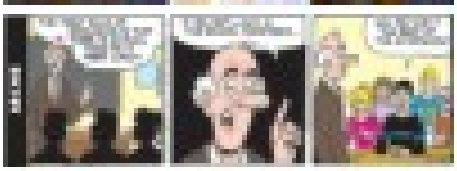
LEISURE

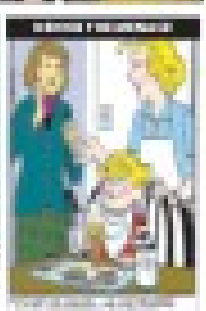


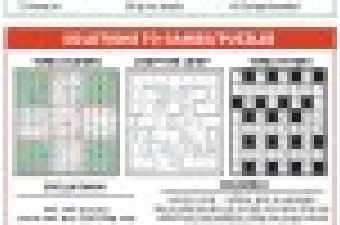




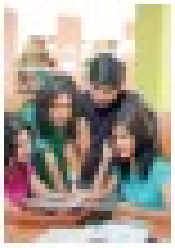








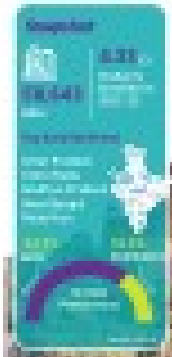
Creativity, ethics gain ground in the automated world

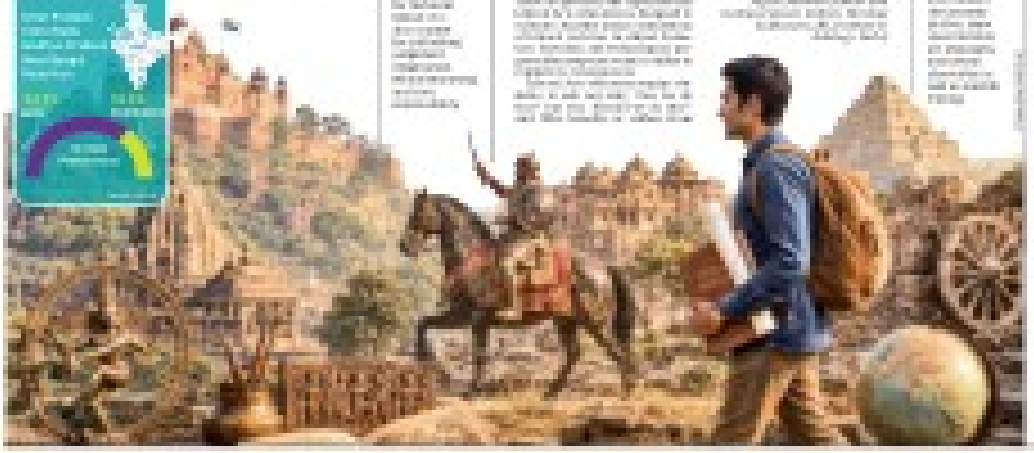


Beyond Equations

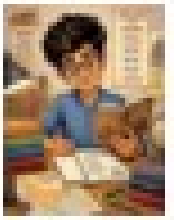
Why Liberal Arts matter alongside STEM

As their combination will produce graduates who are not only technically competent, but also thoughtful, adaptable and human, writes Neera Misra





History moves beyond data and facts



As AI advances, need for sagacity deepens

Recruiters are seeking critical thinking which is relevant because AI can display biases or create information, who to trust most, writes Ali Imran

On ITPL Main Road's Busiest Stretch From Hoodi To Hope Farm, Walkways Exist Only On Paper

This footpath story has TWISTS & TURNS

Pics: Chethan Shivakumar

Hamsaveni.N
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FINDING OWN PATH: Pedestrians on the Hoodi Junction-Hope Farm stretch are forced to navigate through several avoidable hurdles due to footpath encroachments like vendors & parked vehicles

The footpaths do exist, but you just can't walk on them.

On one of east Bengaluru's busiest roads linking Whitefield's IT hubs, apartment complexes, malls and hospitals, pedestrians are forced to dodge parked vehicles, food stalls, shop extensions, garbage, and construction material simply to move forward.

A **TOI** reality check of the 4km Hoodi Junction-Hope Farm stretch of ITPL Main Road found that despite having relatively wide, well-built footpaths, large sections have been swallowed by encroachments. Located a few kilometres from the International Tech Park Bangalore (ITPB) — known as ITPL, the corridor witnesses heavy pedestrian movement. Yet the footpaths, though largely intact and protected by bollards, have steadily been taken over by competing uses.

TOI found shopkeepers extending banners, display racks and signboards onto the walkway, while customers routinely parked two-wheelers and cars partly on the footpath. Several stretches had food stalls operating entirely from the footpath with some vendors even washing utensils and arranging plastic chairs onto pedestrian space. Cooking cylinders, firewood, tyres and other materials are also stored on the footpath.

The survey also found garbage heaps, mattresses, construction material, large cement pipes, OFC and electrical cables, puncture repair shops, and roadside dustbins occupying pedestrian space.

The spillover extends onto the carriageway. Autos, cars and two-wheelers stopping outside shops and eateries routinely eat into the traffic lane.

Encroachments along this stretch are not new. Successive enforcement drives by the erstwhile Mahadevapura Zone and, more recently, Bengaluru East City Corporation have repeatedly cleared the footpaths, only for encroachments to return. The corridor reflects Whitefield's contradiction: while thousands work inside tech parks, others earn a living on the footpath. In the absence of vending zones, pedestrians and vendors continue to compete for the same public space.

Walk-o-meter

2/5

4-km stretch from Hoodi Junction to Hope Farm on ITPL Main Road

SAFETY Poor
Broken paving blocks, dangling utility cables, construction materials, food carts, and parked vehicles frequently obstruct the walkway, forcing pedestrians onto the carriageway. Along several stretches, the reduced walking space increases the risk of conflicts with moving traffic, particularly during peak hours

ACCESSIBILITY Average
The corridor connects major employment, healthcare and commercial destinations, including ITPB, tech parks, gated communities, Nexus Shantiniketan Mall, and Manipal Hospital. While the footpaths are generally wide, encroachments and obstructions reduce their usability

MAINTENANCE Poor
The stretch suffers from broken blocks, garbage, wastewater discharge from eateries, utility cables, construction debris, and incomplete restoration following utility works. Shop displays, parked vehicles and commercial spillovers add to the clutter, reflecting a lack of regular maintenance and enforcement

WHAT TOI FOUND

1. Piled-up garbage on multiple stretches attracting flies, causing foul smell and unhygienic conditions
2. Advertisement boards on footpath, blocking walking space and forcing pedestrians to step onto the road
3. A series of food carts and seating chairs in front of shops, leaving only narrow passages for pedestrians
4. Live cooking and washing utensils on the footpath
5. Parked vehicles further reduce space
6. Puncture shops and repairs on footpath
7. Stacked construction materials

"When the new govt had just taken office, a new joint commissioner was posted to Mahadevapura in 2023. There was an attempt to remove these vendors, but they returned. The entire stretch outside Manipal Hospital gets blocked because cab drivers and auto-rickshaws stop on the road to eat. They ignore the 'no parking' and 'no stopping' signs
Pradeep Nair | RESIDENT, PRESTIGE SHANTINIKETAN

"Footpaths are being misused at several places. Food stalls have taken over large sections of the walkway, making it difficult, especially for senior citizens, to walk here comfortably. We have raised the issue repeatedly, but no action has been taken
Jai Kurup | MEMBER AND FORMER PRESIDENT, HOODI RWA

"Walking from Hoodi Junction to Shantiniketan is far from comfortable. There are obstructions like uneven footpaths and garbage dumps. The footpaths here are poorly maintained
M Devi | RESIDENT, VASWANI RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX

Five killed in 3 road accidents

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Three road accidents in Kolar and Bengaluru claimed the lives of five people, including three members of a family, since Saturday evening.

A couple and their daughter were killed on the spot when the two-wheeler they were riding rammed the trailer of a tractor near V Gittahalli village in Mulbagal on the Bengaluru-Chennai NH Saturday evening. Abubaker, 38, his wife Sabeera, 37, and their daughter Joya, 16, all residents of N Chamakalahalli village in Mulbagal taluk, died on the spot, Mulbagal Rural police said.

The family members were returning home from Hoskote in Bengaluru Rural when the tractor driver, supplying fertilisers to a farm, suddenly entered the highway, resulting in the accident. The tractor driver, Giribabu of Nangali, has been arrested.

In Bengaluru, Badrilal Dariya, a 38-year-old native of Rajasthan, died after being hit by a speeding car near Lalagondanahalli Gate in Devanahalli traffic police limits Saturday night. According to police, Badrilal was working as a cleaner for a Rajasthan-based light commercial vehicle. The vehicle stopped near Devanahalli for a break. While returning after having tea, Badrilal was hit by a car coming from the Bengaluru side.

In the third accident, Ramaraju, 50, lost his life after his truck rammed a moving LCV on NICE Road in Electronics City traffic police limits in the early hours of Sunday. The accident occurred when the speeding truck, travelling from Tumakuru towards Bengaluru, crashed into the rear of the LCV moving ahead. The impact completely crushed the front portion of the truck, trapping the driver inside. Ramaraju died on the spot.

Mohandas Pai receives award

Bengaluru: Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan Saturday attended the 517th birth anniversary celebrations of Nadaprabhu Sri Kempegowda at Jnana Jyoti auditorium, paying tribute to the city's founder as a visionary administrator, city builder, environmentalist, and social reformer whose ideals remain relevant today.

Addressing the gathering, he said Kempegowda envisioned an inclusive city where farmers, traders, artisans, scholars, and people of different faiths could live and prosper together. Present-day Bengaluru, he said, reflects that vision and has evolved into a "Mini Bharat," he added.

On the occasion, TV Mohandas Pai, former CFO of Infosys and co-founder of Akshaya Patra, which runs the world's largest school meal programme, received the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda International Award. It was presented by Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Foundation. TNN

GBA elections: SIR of voter list in 27 wards

Sanjay.Murty@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Ahead of elections to the five city corporations under Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), the State Election Commission (SEC) has ordered a special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in 27 wards after objections were received to the voter lists published on April 18.

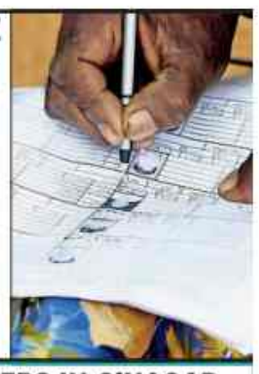
According to an SEC circular, the revision will cover all 24 wards of Mahadevapura assembly constituency and three wards of Gandhinagar assembly seat. Of the Mahadevapura wards, 23 fall under Bengaluru East City Corporation, while Kasavanahalli falls under Bengaluru South City Corporation. The three Gandhinagar wards — Chickpet, Cottonpet, and Nehru Nagar — are under Bengaluru Central City Corporation.

According to the schedule for ward-wise SIR, the booth-level officers (BLOs) will carry out house-to-house enumeration between June 26 and July 4. The draft electoral rolls for these wards will be published on July 9, after which claims and objections can be submitted between July 10 and July 16. The final electoral rolls will then be published on July 31.

SEC has directed electoral registration officers (EROs) and assistant EROs (AEROs) to supervise the exercise and ensure that corrections are incorporated before the draft rolls are published.

ENUMERATION EXERCISE

- **June 26-July 4:** BLOs conduct door-to-door enumeration
- **July 7-8:** Generation of draft electoral rolls
- **July 9:** Publication of draft rolls
- **July 10-16:** Period for lodging claims and objections
- **July 17-26:** Verification and disposal of claims
- **July 31:** Publication of final electoral rolls



CONG: 15,000 FAKE VOTERS IN G'NAGAR

Congress functionary and president of the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee in Gandhinagar, Umesh Babu, alleged that around 15,000 "fake" voters were present in the assembly constituency's electoral rolls. He claimed that previous surveys, particularly at Chickpet, found more than 30 voters registered at 10x15 sqft houses.

"The predominantly commercial locality had cases of over 20 workers registered as voters in several shops. We found around 9,000 such voters and close to 50% of them voted in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," he said, alleging that BJP workers were involved in retaining the "fake" voters. Babu said Gandhinagar MLA Dinesh Gundu Rao had also conducted training sessions for Congress workers ahead of SIR.

Karnataka should spearhead drive to create drug-free India, says vice-prez

Anush.S@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Calling for a united fight against narcotic substance abuse in the country, vice-president CP Radhakrishnan urged Karnataka to lead the way in driving change.

"Awareness should spread to our city and across all districts of Karnataka. Our city and our state should lead the nation in becoming drug-free, and we must take this message to the entire world," Radhakrishnan said.

At the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan Conclave and the 31st foundation day of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) Sunday, he emphasised that change should start from individuals. Drug abuse among youngsters in the country is a challenge continuing to affect families and communities as well, he said. "Even the parents cannot say that their son or daughter has become a drug addict due to social stigma," he added.

Apart from law enforcement, Radhakrishnan pointed out that an individual's willpower is crucial to eradicating drugs. Radhakrishnan said chief minister DK Shivakumar, who was also present at the event, has assured him of a drug-free state. "I am sure Bengaluru will soon be totally free of drugs. He (CM) has assured me he will take the strongest action against the drug mafia. That is the only way society can be saved," he said.

He said the oath taken by more than 25,000 medical students around Kanteerava Stadium would spread among other youngsters as well, leading to a significant change in society. "Take a vow that first my university will be free of drugs, then my city will be free of drugs, and my state will be freeof drugs, which will lead India to be free of drugs. From India, this message should reach the globe. The world should be free of drugs — that is our ultimate aim."

Citing his work as chancellor of Delhi University, Radhakrishnan said the institution had become drug-free. He urged medical students to develop innovative approaches to tackle the country's drug menace. "We need innovative approaches that integrate technology, counselling services, support networks and public health outreach. Evidence must guide action, and research must inform policymakers. Schools, colleges, families, community organisations, healthcare institutions, law enforcement agencies, and civil society must all work together."

CM: Will ban pan masala if intoxicants are found

Earlier in the day, Shivakumar said he had received reports that certain gutka, pan masala and areca nut products sold in Karnataka may contain intoxicating substances producing a drug-like "high."

He said that if verified, the govt would impose a blanket ban on all forms of gutka, pan masala and chewing tobacco in the state.

Shivakumar noted that while Karnataka has a dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Force, local enforcement would be limited without stronger action against cross-border supply. "The drug menace is like a tap and a bucket. As long as the tap at the border remains open, the bucket keeps filling up," the CM said.

Pics: Syed Asif

A UNITED FRONT Thousands of students took pledge at an anti-drugs campaign, at the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan Conclave. Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan & CM DK Shivakumar addressed students as part of the 31st foundation day of RGUHS at Kanteerava Stadium Sunday

Students faint; Shivakumar calls for discipline despite heat stress

FEELING PINCH OF HEAT

In what was being described as a historic awareness gathering against the use of drugs, the RGUHS event had students struggling to sit in the heat. Several students, while being lectured on the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle by national leaders Sunday, were visibly fatigued, while a handful of them fainted.

At least six students had to be carried away from their seating areas by the volunteers by noon. Over 25,000 RGUHS students were seated across the stands and the grass turf of the Sree Kanteerava Stadium from 9am. But by 11 am, restlessness and frustration kicked in for those sitting on the turf as they were exposed to the scorching morning heat. A female student seated on the turf very close to the stadium's east block fell unconscious.

By the time the CM reached the podium for his speech in the afternoon, several students had already vacated the turf and shifted to shaded areas. Seeing the empty areas among the audience, Shivakumar directed the students to come back: "If you are disciplined ... and want to be ambassadors, come back and sit in your designated areas." With more students starting to feel unwell, the audience reduced to half midway through his speech.

The CM also praised Bengaluru's weather: "My friends, all of you are just trying to get away from this heat, but you should also remember that in the entire country, you don't have this type of weather... This city is called not only the IT capital or health capital of India, but also an air-conditioned city."

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THEATRE REVIEWS

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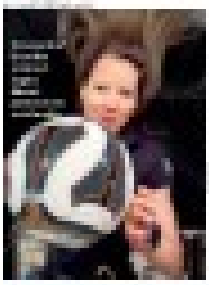

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Did jilted lover move to city to pursue ex?

SIRA BLAST Survivor Gives Statement To Police, Shares Chilling Details of Abuse By Former Lover

Chaithanya.Swamy
@timesofindia.com

TOI

BLAST FROM PAST: Nagendra took bombs out of a bag & exploded one in the cab while they were near Jogihalli village in Sira taluk

Bengaluru: An attempt to escape an abusive relationship ended in a desperate fight for survival inside a moving cab, culminating in a bomb blast that killed the man who had allegedly vowed that the couple should "die together".

In a detailed statement to police, 23-year-old operation theatre technician Ramya described how her former boyfriend, Nagendra T, 28, allegedly abducted her at knifepoint, repeatedly threatened to end both their lives, attacked her with a knife during the journey, and finally set off an explosive device after bystanders rescued her.

Her statement was recorded by Kallambella police at the Tumakuru district govt hospital on the same day as the dramatic sequence of events unfolded near Jogihalli village in Sira taluk.

Ramya, a native of Agasuru village in Ankola, Uttara Kannada district, told investigators that she had known Nagendra for nearly six years. A senior from a neighbouring village during their college days, he had initially been her boyfriend. But over the past four years, she alleged, the relationship turned violent, with Nagendra frequently assaulting and threatening her.

Unable to endure the abuse, she left her native place, first moving to her grandparents' home in Kundapura before relocating to Bengaluru about 18 months ago, where she found work as an OT technician. Even after changing places and blocking his phone number, Nagendra allegedly continued to pursue her.

According to her statement, he appeared at her rented house about 10 days before the incident and threatened to kill himself if she refused to marry him. Afraid that he might act on the threat, she told him she would marry him and persuaded him to leave. But he returned Saturday morning.

Ramya alleged that Nagendra refused to leave her house, accused her of betraying him and threatened to kill her. He allegedly pulled out a knife and even attempted to attack her roommate, leaving Ramya with little choice but to accompany him to prevent further violence.

Nagendra then booked a cab and forced her into it. As the vehicle headed out of Bengaluru, he repeatedly told her they should return to their native place and die together, she told police. If they died elsewhere, he allegedly said, their families might never find their bodies.

Alert cabbie to the rescue

The journey soon turned bloodier. During an argument inside the moving cab, Nagendra allegedly attacked Ramya on her left shoulder with the knife. When he attempted to slit her throat, she fought back, suffering another injury in the back of her head. The attack was witnessed by the cab driver, Praveen, who stopped the vehicle and, with the help of passersby, pulled Ramya to safety.

It was then, according to investigators, that Nagendra removed an explosive device from his bag and tried to set it off using a lighter. Ramya screamed that he had a bomb, alerting those around the vehicle. Praveen attempted to pull Nagendra out and save the cab. He managed to snatch away one explosive device, but seconds later another exploded inside the vehicle. The powerful blast set the cab on flames, killing Nagendra on the spot.

Ramya was rushed to a hospital and discharged Sunday evening. Investigators said both families had been aware of the duo's relationship and repeated disputes.

A senior police officer said the investigation has also revealed that Ramya had recently become friends with another person, something Nagendra might have learnt about. Police found that Nagendra had moved to Bengaluru only a week before the incident and had been working as a delivery executive for a major e-commerce company while staying in a paying guest accommodation.

Police said Nagendra's relocation to Bengaluru might have been solely to take Ramya back.

Probe shifts to crude bomb source

Times News Network

PLANNED ATTACK: CCTV visuals of Nagendra visiting the house of Ramya on Saturday morning before taking her in a cab

Bengaluru: Investigators are now trying to trace the origin of the crude bomb that killed a man who allegedly kidnapped his former girlfriend from Bengaluru before detonating the explosive inside a cab in Tumakuru district, bringing into focus how such devices circulate outside regulated channels.

The blast occurred Saturday afternoon near Jogihalli village in Sira, where Nagendra T, 28, allegedly ended his life after attacking his former girlfriend, Ramya, during a journey to Ankola in Uttara Kannada district. Tumakuru SP Ashok KV said samples collected from the exploded vehicle and another crude bomb recovered from the roadside were sent to a forensic science laboratory for examination. "We are making efforts to ascertain where Nagendra sourced the crude bombs from," the officer said. The investigators suspect the explosives may have been brought from Uttara Kannada. A senior police officer said crude bombs are commonly used for illegal fishing along the coast and are also used by some farmers to scare away wild animals from crops.

Police recorded cab driver Praveen's statement. The kidnap case was first registered by Bengaluru's Siddapura police under Sections 137(2) (kidnapping) and 351 (criminal intimidation) of the BNS based on a complaint filed by Ramya's housemate, Nayana Dinakar Shetty.

Police said they traced the vehicle using CCTV footage, RTO records and the cab owner's details before contacting the driver. By then, however, Nagendra had already attacked Ramya and the fatal explosion had occurred.

Investigators have also collected CCTV footage from buildings near Ramya's residence to reconstruct the events leading to the alleged abduction. A senior police officer told **TOI**, "Had Nayana contacted us earlier, we could have prevented the incident."

Praveen told media Sunday: "I had stopped to fill fuel in Kallambella, where Ramya and Nagendra used the washroom. Meanwhile, I received a call from Ankola police informing me Nagendra had kidnapped Ramya. We continued the journey and he started attacking her. I stopped the car and sent her to a safer place on a bike of a passerby... I had pledged my wife's gold jewellery to purchase the car, which I've now lost."

Expert: Metro Phase 3 double-decker plan likely to boost car use

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Bengaluru: Bengaluru's proposed double-decker Metro corridors could reverse years of efforts to shift commuters towards public transport by making private vehicle travel more attractive, according to IISc Prof Ashish Verma. Releasing an independent technical assessment of the project, Verma argued that urban mobility planning should focus on increasing the share of trips made by Metro, buses, walking and cycling rather than creating additional road capacity for cars.

According to the study, the introduction of double-decker corridors under Metro Phase 3 could reduce Metro ridership by around 11,000 passengers a day and that the car usage would rise by nearly 4%. Verma claimed the shift away from public transport would lead to higher fuel consumption and increased emissions, undermining the city's sustainability goals.

Calling the proposal a "suicide of the Metro system's own objectives," he said the project risks weakening public transport while strengthening reliance on cars.

Residents flag concerns

Residents of JP Nagar and surrounding areas allege that the project could worsen congestion by fuelling more traffic towards already busy junctions near Vega City and Kanakapura Road.

They argued that lessons from the Ragigudda flyover, which has witnessed traffic bottlenecks, have not been adequately considered. They also questioned official estimates of tree loss and review of environmental impact.

Citizens challenge flyover proposal

Residents opposing the proposed Indiranagar elevated corridor have questioned the data and assumptions used to justify the project, arguing that authorities have not clearly established the problem the flyover is intended to solve.

Members of I Change Indiranagar alleged that the DPR relies on limited traffic data and does not adequately explain where traffic using the corridor originates or whether alternative solutions were evaluated.

Residents argued that the project could significantly alter the character of the neighbourhood, affecting parks, trees, public spaces and pedestrian movement along key stretches such as 80 Feet Road, CMH Road and 100 Feet Road. They have sought a detailed review of the project's various costs, benefits and alternatives before construction on it moves ahead.

BDA's sapling drive sets world record

GUINNESS APPROVAL

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) created a Guinness World Record by planting nearly 15 lakh native saplings across multiple locations in 12 hours, in one of the world's largest coordinated urban plantation drives. The Guinness World Records adjudicator presented the award to Karnataka govt Sunday.

At Dr Shivaram Karanth Layout (DSKL), over 7.1 lakh saplings were planted against a target of just over 7 lakh, achieving 101% of the goal. At Banashankari 6th Stage Layout (BSKL), 1,05,800 saplings were planted against a target of 1,05,000.

Organised on Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Jayanti, the drive drew participation from citizens, govt departments, educational institutions, resident welfare associations, corporates, NGOs, and thousands of volunteers. It covered major BDA-developed areas and was part of the Bengaluru Urban Ecological Restoration Mission 2026-30, aimed at expanding green cover, enhancing biodiversity, and building climate-resilient neighbourhoods.

"This Guinness World Record belongs to every citizen of Bengaluru who believes environmental stewardship begins with collective action. Planting 15 lakh native saplings in a single day is not merely a record — it is a commitment to future generations," BDA chairman NA Haris said.

BDA commissioner Major P Manivannan said the focus now shifts to ensuring the survival, maintenance, and healthy growth of the saplings. The campaign was supported by extensive logistics, including transportation, plantation tools, hydration points, medical assistance, and technical guidance.

4 constituencies with highest allocations have Cong MLAs

▶Continued from page 1

Among individual constituencies, Shivajinagar follows Byatarayanapura with works worth Rs 80 crore, while Gandhinagar and Chamarajapet have been allocated Rs 73 crore and Rs 71.5 crore, respectively. Bommanahalli has received Rs 60 crore, while BTM Layout, Yeshwanthpur and Shantinagar are among constituencies receiving around Rs 50 crore worth of projects — just as Mahadevapura.

Interestingly, the top four assembly constituencies with highest allocation have Congress MLAs.

A corporation-wise analysis shows East has cumulatively got Rs 110 crore, the least among the five newly formed corporations. Bengaluru North, of which Byatarayanapura is part, has the highest at Rs 466.5 crore, followed by West (Rs 415 crore), South (Rs 328 crore) and Central (Rs 311.5 crore).

The disparity is likely to raise questions given the persistent infrastructure challenges faced by the IT corridor. Areas such as Whitefield, Bellandur, Varthur, Panathur, Kadugodi, Hoodi and Kundalahalli routinely witness complaints related to poor roads, flooding, traffic congestion and inadequate civic infrastructure.

Residents and industry bodies have repeatedly sought greater investment in basic infrastructure as the region continues to drive a significant share of Bengaluru's economic activity.

The govt has projected the initiative as an infrastructure package aimed at addressing long-pending civic issues. An analysis of the order shows that of the total package, Rs 1,631 crore has been set aside for corporation-wise road, drain and footpath works.

The remaining Rs 369 crore will fund a range of civic infrastructure projects including parks, community halls, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, sports infrastructure, markets, lake rejuvenation works and other public amenities.

The Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party (BNP) has alleged a significant portion of the funds earmarked for improving Bengaluru's road network is being diverted to non-road projects.

"While the package has been projected as a major road infrastructure initiative, nearly Rs 369 crore has been allocated for civic works such as MLA offices, community halls, multipurpose buildings, parks and other public facilities," the party told **TOI**.

Body parts recovered, but search ops for missing worker continue

Times News Network

Bengaluru: More than 10 days after a worker went missing inside the Balagere sewage treatment plant (STP), rescue teams recovered what are believed to be parts of his body late Thursday. However, the search operation will continue.

Fire department sources said rescuers recovered a thigh and an arm during operations Thursday night. The remains are believed to be those of Akhilesh, 30, a worker from Bihar who went missing after falling into the sewage treatment facility on June 18 while on duty. Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is yet to officially confirm the development.

Police have directed rescue teams to continue the search, stating that the recovered remains are insufficient to formally conclude the case. Sources said investigators are seeking additional remains, including the skull, before calling off the operation.

The recovery follows days of intensive efforts by personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), fire and emergency services, police, and BWSSB. Teams have spent the past week cutting through concrete slabs, dewatering compartments, and manually searching through sewage, sludge, and accumulated waste inside the facility.

Rescuers earlier described the operation as one of the most challenging they had encountered. Thick layers of silt, plastic waste, sewage sludge, and biomedical waste inside interconnected chambers hampered the search. Continuous inflow of water and intermittent rainfall further complicated efforts, forcing teams to repeatedly drain sections before resuming work.

After the recovery of body parts, operations were briefly suspended before resuming Friday morning.

Akhilesh and Akilan (29), a mechanical supervisor from Tamil Nadu, fell into the BWSSB-operated STP while inspecting a section of the facility at the end of their shift. Akilan's body was recovered on June 20 and later handed over to his family.

4 women held for illegal sale of Tydol tablets

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Bengaluru: In a crackdown on the illegal sale of scheduled drugs, Chamarajpet police have arrested four women in two separate operations for allegedly selling Tydol, an opioid painkiller tablet, without medical authorisation. These tablets, used to treat moderate-to-severe acute pain in adults, require a valid prescription for sale. The tablets are used as narcotic drugs by their users.

Interestingly, the women started selling the tablets after their family members were caught by police a couple of months ago. This is said to be the first time Bengaluru cops have caught women selling these opioids.

Two of the accused, Shobha A (37) and Baby Shalini (31), are residents of Bhangi Colony in Chamarajpet, while the remaining two, Shyamala (30) and Munni (50), are residents of Anandpura, Tipunagar. Both operations were carried out on June 18.

On a tip-off that a couple of women were selling tablets to a group of youngsters on Mysuru Road, a police team rushed to the spot and caught the duo. The buyers fled on spotting the cops. Police allegedly recovered 30 Tydol tablets from the accused, Shobha and Shalini, who confessed to selling each tablet for Rs 200. Both were taken into custody.

In a similar operation, the team found the other two women carrying 20 tablets concealed in a plastic cover. They too were found selling each tablet for Rs 200.

Police found that the four women had taken precautions, such as not using mobile phones. "Since they were guided on the locations where the tablets could be sold, the women would loiter at those locations and approach consumers using the code word Goli," a senior officer said.

Research uses AI to hunt cervical cancer risks

Times News Network

Lalasa Mukku has developed AI-based models aimed at identifying women at risk of cervical cancer by analysing precancerous changes

Bengaluru: Cervical cancer rarely appears suddenly. In many women, the disease is preceded by subtle cellular changes that can linger unnoticed for years before turning invasive. A Bengaluru researcher believes artificial intelligence may be able to spot those warning signs long before a tumour appears.

Lalasa Mukku, a researcher at Christ (Deemed-to-be-University), has developed a series of AI-based models aimed at identifying women at elevated risk of cervical cancer by analysing precancerous changes known as Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN).

Mukku, who is from the department of artificial intelligence and data science engineering of Christ, also holds patents related to an AI model designed to predict cancer risk as much as five years before tumour formation.

Cervical cancer remains among the leading cancers affecting women worldwide, with the burden falling disproportionately on low-and middle-income countries, where access to specialists and screening remains limited. Early diagnosis is known to improve outcomes substantially.

Mukku's approach combines images captured during colposcopy examinations with patient clinical information. During these tests, doctors examine the cervix after applying saline, acetic acid and iodine solutions. Each stage highlights tissue differently, producing clues that can reveal precancerous changes.

In a 2024 study published in the International Journal of Advances in Intelligent Informatics, Mukku developed a model called CMT-CNN that combines these sequential images with clinical data. The system achieved a classification accuracy of 92.3% in identifying CIN. The researchers said the model was intended to support clinicians and improve screening.

Another challenge lies in the images themselves. Bright reflections caused by moisture on the cervix often resemble the white lesions doctors look for, potentially confusing computer systems.

To address this, Mukku developed a separate technique, detailed in a paper published in Multimedia Tools and Applications, that removes these reflections and accurately isolates the cervical region before analysis, thus, improving diagnosis.

More recently, in a paper presented at an IEEE conference in 2025, she proposed a quantum convolutional neural network architecture for analysing medical images. Tested on publicly available cervical cancer screening datasets, the model reported an overall accuracy of about 98.6%. The technology remains at the research stage and would require extensive clinical validation before being used in hospitals. But if successful, it can help identify the risk while there is time to prevent it.

Master plan for temple devpt

Deputy chief minister G Parameshwara, who visited Kollur Sri Mookambika Temple and offered puja Sunday, said the govt plans to prepare a master plan for the temple's comprehensive development. He told reporters that the focus will be on improving infrastructure to accommodate the large number of devotees arriving. A final decision will be taken after discussions with the temple committee and officials. TNN

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REMEMBRANCES

4th Year REMEMBRANCE

29th June 2022
Mitravinda Massey (Rinu)
Oh for the touch of a vanish'd hand. And the sound of a voice that is still
Rajiv Massey

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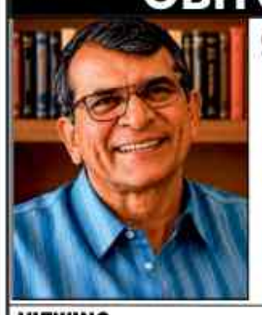

SHOAIB AHMED
Founder & CEO - Catalystor
Former President - Tally Solutions
Co- Founder - Vedha Automation
S/o Late S. M. Sait
Passed away peacefully on 28.06.2026

VIEWING
Monday, 29 June 2026 After 10:30 AM to 6:30 PM
#590, 2nd Cross, 4th C Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru-34

NAMAZ-E-JANAZA Monday, 29 June 2026 After Isha prayer (8.30 PM)
Khadriya Masjid,Millers Road, Bengaluru

BURIAL
Khuddus Sab Burial Ground, Nandidurg Road, Bengaluru

Deeply Mourned by: Family, Relatives & Friends

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26.09.1984 to 29.06.2007, you left us very unexpectedly, leaving us in extreme Despair your presence was an Inspiration to the family your absence is deeply felt. Family, Friends and H. P. Rathan Charitable Trust (R)

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WATER, BUT MAKE IT LUXURY: Still, sparkling, & seriously fancy

What is fine water?

From hydration to luxury experience

How fine waters are classified

Minerality

pH

Carbonation

Origin

Tokyo to the flavour of food: Water sommeliers changing the way fine dining thinks about hydration

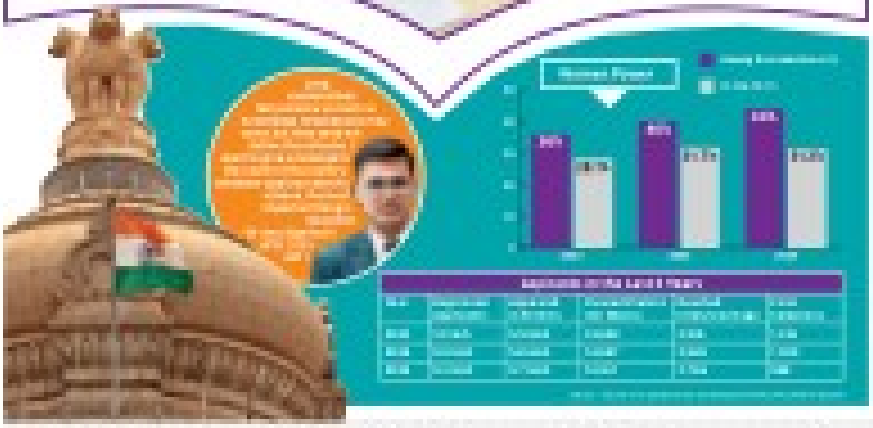
What makes tasting water so hard

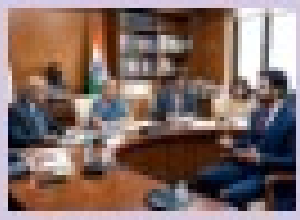
Fine water by the numbers

MANY SOURCES, MANY WATERS

Civil servants will need to think on their feet

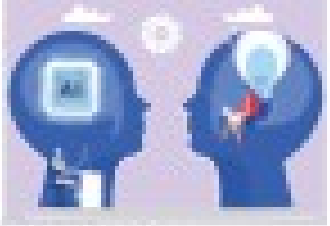
Aspirants should leverage AI to boost their preparation while honing the distinctly human skills that the examination and governance ultimately value, writes Dayanidhi Singh





Reinventing Interviews to explore real personalities

UPSC must constantly reassess its pattern to stay ahead of AI-driven responses, writes Sameer Sharma



With AI working best as assistant, ingenuity will win the race

Overdependence on tech tools could weaken critical analysis needed to crack the competitive exam, writes Jobin S Kottaram

UNDETERRED Crimes Against Women & Kids Increased After Surveillance Infra | Can't Expect Farmers To Simply Part With Land: Min

Little help? Women at highest risk got least protection, audit reveals

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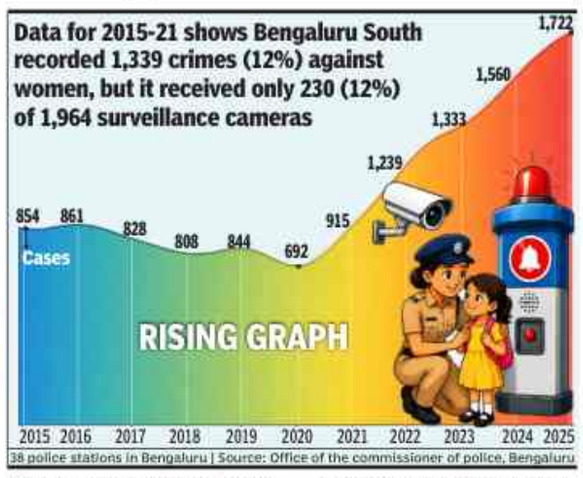
Bengaluru: A Rs 667-crore Safe City project aimed at improving safety for women and children in Bengaluru suffered from poor deployment of critical infrastructure, with high crime areas receiving fewer surveillance measures than safer parts of the city, a state audit has found.



38 police stations in Bengaluru | Source: Office of the commissioner of police, Bengaluru

BENGALURU SAFE CITY PROJECT

The compliance audit, conducted between May and Sept 2025, examined the implementation of the centrally funded project and found significant gaps in the placement of surveillance cameras, safety islands and women police outposts despite crime patterns indicating the need for stronger protection in specific areas.

Zonal crime data for 2015-21 shows Bengaluru South recorded 1,339 crimes against women, accounting for 15.5% of the city's total and the highest among all zones. But the zone received only 230 — or 12% — of the 1,964 surveillance cameras installed under the project.

The disparity extended beyond CCTV coverage. Safety islands equipped with panic buttons linked to the police command and control centre, built-in speakers and 360-degree AI-enabled cameras, as well as women police outposts staffed by female personnel, were also unevenly distributed.

In contrast, Central Zone, which accounted for only 3% of crimes against women and children, had the highest number of safety islands (8) and women police outposts (9).

The audit, which sampled 38 police stations, also found that crimes against women and children increased after the installation of surveillance infrastructure — rising from 8.8% during 2015-21 to 13.4% in 2024-25.

It pointed out that thousands of cameras installed by other govt agencies remained outside the home department's surveillance network, limiting their usefulness for real-time monitoring and investigations. These included around 7,000 cameras at BMTC and bus stand facilities, 74 cameras in children's homes and more than 5,000 cameras in govt schools and colleges.

Cops decided locations: Govt

In its response, the govt said camera locations were identified by local police stations based on crime rates, footfall and local requirements, and deviations — if any — were approved by deputy commissioners of police.

The govt also told auditors integration of surveillance systems across agencies was being pursued. While camera feeds from Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Ltd had already been linked to the command centre, integration with BMTC was still in progress.

Open to building townships like Bidadi, says Yathindra

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TOI

FOR THE TREES: Protesting the proposed Bidadi township project, farmers from Byramangala and Kanchagaranahalli villages Sunday staged a unique 'Appiko' (tree-hugging) movement and urged the govt to scrap the project. They said they would intensify protests if the govt refused

Bengaluru: Although the proposed Bidadi township project has been mired in controversy, the govt has indicated that it is open to developing similar townships on the outskirts of other major cities in the state.

Urban development minister Yathindra Siddaramaiah told **TOI** the govt is receptive to the idea — provided there is consensus among farmers.

"It's an excellent idea to decongest cities," said Yathindra. "A developed city requires such townships. However, concerns of farmers need to be addressed, and they cannot be asked to simply part with their properties."

He said the govt would need to factor in the prevailing market value of land and evolve a compensation formula to ensure all stakeholders are satisfied.

The Bidadi township has become the centre of a political confrontation between chief minister DK Shivakumar and Union minister and JD(S) state president HD Kumaraswamy. On Sunday, Kumaraswamy reiterated that neither he nor his party opposed the creation of new townships, but insisted such projects should be taken up only on barren land.

"The govt has thousands of acres across the state. Let it use that land instead of using fertile land," he said.

Meanwhile, Yathindra said the govt plans to strengthen local planning authorities, the nodal agencies responsible for urban development, to accelerate growth of other major cities. He said there is an urgent need to promote industrialisation in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

"Since there are few takers, we are looking at increasing the floor area ratio (FAR) in these cities," he said.

Siddaramaiah no longer CM, BJP woos Kuruba community

Times News Network

Hubballi: Senior BJP functionaries Sunday urged members of the Kuruba community to support the party, highlighting leadership opportunities and reiterating support for the community's long-pending demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The appeal was made at a function organised by Kuruba Samaj Abhivruddhi Vedike, Karnataka, to felicitate newly elected Rajya Sabha member M Nagaraja. Addressing the gathering, Union minister Prahlad Joshi said the Kuruba community's long association with the Congress had reached its end since Siddaramaiah has been removed as chief minister and urged the community to support BJP instead.

He said BJP was keeping leadership positions open for Kurubas and added that those who joined the party first would be given organisational responsibilities.

Deputy leader of the opposition in the assembly, Arvind Bellad said the community no longer had any compulsion to stay with Congress, adding that its earlier support was largely centred around Siddaramaiah.

PTI

DRUMMING UP SUPPORT: Minister Pralhad Joshi at the Kuruba event on Sunday

During the event, Kanak Guru Peeth seer Niranjananandpuri Swamiji urged Joshi to help secure ST status for the Kuruba community, a demand that has been the subject of sustained protests.

Responding to the appeal, Joshi said: "Officials are engaged in Census work. Once it is completed, the file related to ST status for the Kuruba community will be taken up."

Hurling slippers not our culture, HDK tells partymen

Union minister and JD(S) state president **HD Kumaraswamy** Sunday appealed to party workers not to react to provocative remarks made against him or his family members in the backdrop of the slipper-hurling incident involving Congress legislator Pradeep Eshwar in Chikkaballapur. A JD(S) worker allegedly hurled a slipper at Eshwar during Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Jayanti celebrations, while others allegedly abused the MLA. They were reacting to Eshwar's alleged remarks questioning whether Kumaraswamy and his wife had purchased over 30 acres of land in Bidadi with money earned from selling dhotis. Kumaraswamy said making allegations against him, his father and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, and other members of his family was nothing new. "People say things about me and my family members for political gain," he said, calling it "cheap tactics". He said breaking the law or hurling slippers was not the culture of JD(S).

Case registered, 4 detained

Chikkaballapur police registered a suo motu case over the slipper-hurling incident involving MLA Pradeep Eshwar and detained four persons on charges of abusing an elected representative in public, and obstructing police from discharging their duties. JD(S) youth wing president **Nikhil Kumaraswamy** said one of those detained is Akhil Reddy, Chikkaballapur district JD(S) social media president. He condemned Reddy's arrest and that the party would provide Reddy with legal assistance.

More tickets for women

Union minister and JD(S) state president HD Kumaraswamy said the regional outfit will field more women candidates in the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections. At a meeting of the party's Bengaluru women's wing, he said women must play a greater role in strengthening the party and that brass will select candidates based not only on their personal popularity but also on their organisational abilities, commitment and participation in public causes.

Dharmasthala oath: Big statement, limited resolution

Sandeep.Moudgal @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: The decision by state BJP president BY Vijayendra to ask party legislators to take a truth test at Dharmasthala to find those who cross-voted during the legislative council elections, is the latest in a long line of political disputes invoking the shrine's religious significance.

The temple of Lord Manjunatha, regarded as an incarnation of Lord Shiva, is widely believed to be the ultimate venue for affirming the truth. The practice, known as 'aane-pramana' in Kannada, involves taking an oath before the deity and is considered a solemn test of integrity.

Over the years, the ritual has increasingly found its way into Karnataka's political discourse, with rival politicians challenging each other to swear before the deity to substantiate allegations or deny wrongdoing.

The practice gained prominence in 2011 when CM BS Yediyurappa challenged his political rival and now ally and Union minister HD Kumaraswamy to take the oath at Dharmasthala over allegations of corruption.

Since then, the temple has repeatedly been invoked during political controversies, with functionaries across parties urging opponents to take the truth test.

SURFACE-LEVEL EFFORT

Political analyst Sandeep Shastri said that in the case of the cross-voting incident, the oath-taking exercise would result only in a surface-level effort to resolve the issue. "What political parties should reflect on is why cross-voting takes place in the first place. These truth tests act only as a surface-level effort to prove a point," he said.

CHIP OFF OLD BLOCK: File picture of former chief minister BS Yediyurappa and son BY Vijayendra of BJP at Dhamasthala

A more recent instance occurred in 2022, when former BJP minister Hartal Halappa and Congress MLA Belur Gopalkrishna took opposing oaths at Dharmasthala amid allegations that Halappa had accepted bribes from the sand mafia. However, the controversy faded after Halappa lost the assembly election.

Several BJP MLAs question the effectiveness of such public oaths, arguing that they do little to establish the facts of a case.

"No person will accept his mistake; the accuser merely wants to prove a point. The oath is just another form of escapism," said a BJP legislator. Another legislator was concerned over the repeated use of the temple in political disputes, saying it could erode public faith in the institution.

Blaze breaks out at chemical plant in industrial area

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A massive fire broke out at a chemical manufacturing factory in Bommasandra Industrial Area near Hebbagodi Sunday evening, triggering panic and sending thick plumes of smoke into the sky. No casualties were reported, though the blaze remained uncontrolled till 9.30pm.

Fire and emergency services personnel received information around 5.10pm about the blaze at Divya Importers, a factory that manufactures acid, thinner, and other industrial chemicals. The unit is owned by Harinath, a resident of BTM Layout.

According to preliminary information, the factory employs more than 20 workers. However, as the unit was closed for its weekly Sunday holiday, no employees were inside when the fire broke out, averting a major tragedy. A security guard was stationed outside the premises.

Firefighters rushed to the spot with three water bowsers and a water tanker, and worked to contain the blaze while preventing it from spreading to neighbouring industrial units. Hebbagodi police assisted in the emergency response.

The cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained.

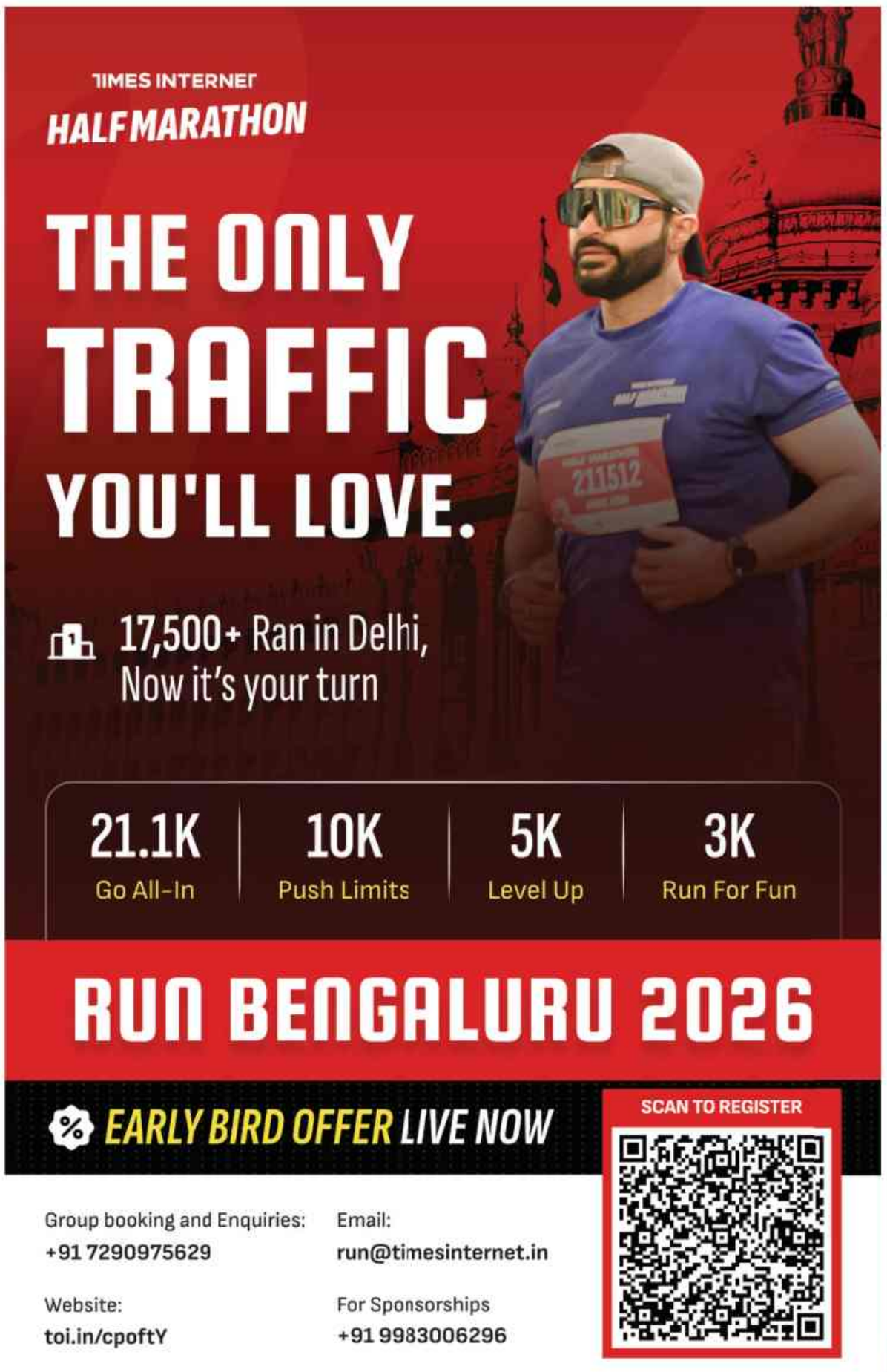
11 lakh kids get vaccine on Day 1

Bengaluru: The city achieved 96.4% coverage on day 1 of the National Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme Sunday, with 11,06,535 children aged under five receiving polio drops across the five city corporations under GBA.

PULSE POLIO

The target set for the four-day drive, scheduled from June 28 to July 1, is 11,47,872. The corporation-wise coverage stood at: Central – 1,59,106; East – 1,73,781; West – 2,81,369; North – 2,78,880; and South – 2,13,399.

Notably, GBA achieved this coverage on the opening day without conducting house-to-house visits. Of the total children immunised, 10,27,347 received polio drops at booths set up across the wards. TNN



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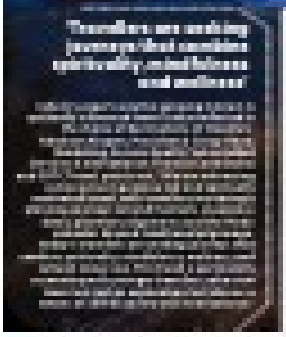
Will the stars guide your next holiday?

What is astrocartography

'Astrocartography predictions' vs 'astrocartography'

Advice for meaningful travel experiences



'Travellers are seeking journeys that combine spirituality, mindfulness and wellness'

With the stars in West Asia, I decided to seek tarot reading before making plans. I eventually chose to visit Europe, and a lot of reading was very helpful. I wanted to stay with the wife but wasn't sure whether that was a good idea. Drawing cards helped me decide on the location. I was in two minds when planning the trip, but I booked everything after the reading.

When planning a trip, I consider not only which country to visit but also the timing. This time, when I was booking tickets for Nepal, I consulted my tarot card reader. She advised me to delay the trip and avoid travelling during a specific period. I changed my travel dates accordingly, and it worked out well for me.

'70% would reconsider a trip based on a horoscope warning'

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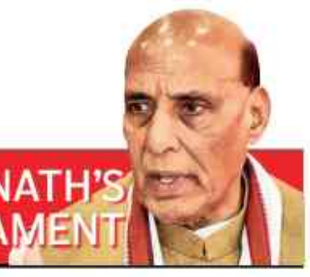
TIMES NATION

** THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2026

UDDHAV SEEKS DISQUALIFICATION OF SIX REBEL MPs, ALLEGES BIGGER CONSPIRACY BEHIND DEFECTIONS

BJP ACCUSES OPPOSITION OF TWISTING RAJNATH'S REMARKS ON OPERATION SINDOOR IN PARLIAMENT



After controversy, Bengal govt may pay schools for noon meal eggs

Kolkata: In a bid to bypass the ongoing "egg-less" midday meal controversy, Bengal school education department is mulling the Odisha model of paying schools an additional amount to buy eggs for midday meals if they so choose, officials said Sunday, **reports Poulami Banerjee**.

School managements would receive extra funds to buy eggs. Education department officials may meet July 1 to work out the modalities.

Last week, Bengal govt tasked Iskcon with cooking midday meals. Iskcon announced plans to drop eggs from the menu, drawing criticism.

Iskcon spokesperson gagged after egg row

Kolkata: Iskcon Kolkata vice-president and spokesperson Radharamn Das Sunday said on X he had been "relieved of all responsibilities" and barred from representing the organisation before media, govt authorities or any public forum. Within hours, he deleted the post. Das also removed Iskcon references from his X profile, first calling himself "Hindu" and later changing it to "servant".

Border tribe alleges Chinese army land grab in Arunachal

Says PLA Occupying Nah Community Land, Building Camps, Roads

Kangkan.Kalita1
@timesofindia.com

Pic for representation

A point on the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh

Guwahati: The Nah tribal community in Arunachal Pradesh has raised an alarm over alleged Chinese incursions along the international border in Upper Subansiri district, claiming that the PLA had occupied a major portion of their grazing, hunting and agricultural areas over the past six years.

In a memorandum, of which **TOI** is in possession, was recently submitted to Upper Subansiri deputy commissioner, where Nah Welfare Society (NWS) president Keru Chader said, "Our ancestral lands which were our hunting areas where we freely roamed and collected forest products few years back and our cattle grazing areas are now under the occupation of the Chinese PLA."

Alleging Chinese activities across five locations, which they claimed came under the Taksing revenue circle in Upper Subansiri, NWS said the Chinese govt had been rapidly extending its control over territories along the international border by strategically occupying important locations.

Nacho MLA, Nakap Nalo, said the matter required immediate investigation as it was related to national security. "There are obvious concerns (regarding the allegations) since it's a national issue," Nalo said.

Detailing the transgressions, NWS alleged that the Chinese had significantly increased their activities long the Taksing border area over the last 10 to 15 years "with an intention to occupy as much land as possible".

According to the tribal organisation, several locations, which had been under their traditional control until 2020, were allegedly occupied by the PLA.

The organisation said locations like Oying in the Asaphila area, Paniar (Chujarta area), Marpan (Marnafe), Potrang (Lake), and Tindingtang (TG), had gradually come under Chinese incursion, alleging that these places were close to Taksing headquarters, with some of them being considered pilgrimage sites.

The memorandum also alleged construction of military camps and roads by the Chinese army on Indian territory. "We do not doubt our Army and always have faith in them. They have been guarding our land for many years, but their efforts are not enough. The intention and speed of the present activities of the Chinese PLA at Taksing area is very alarming and a matter of grave concern for us. We are losing our land inch by inch day by day to them," Chader said in the memorandum.

Senior district officials, including deputy commissioner Gambo Tasso, were unavailable for acomment.

4 of Hry family killed, 3 hurt as speeding SUV rams car

Meerut: Four members of a family from Haryana's Sonipat district were killed and three others suffered critical injuries after their car was hit from behind by a speeding SUV on busy Delhi-Dehradun Expressway in Rampur Maniharan area of UP's SaharanpurFriday evening, cops said. CCTV footage of the incident was made available on Sunday, **reports Rahul Singh**.

According to Saharanpur district magistrate (DM) Arvind Kumar Chauhan, preliminary findings and CCTV footage indicated that the car with the victims was being reversed after the driver apparently missed the exit when the speeding SUV rammed it from behind.

Chauhan added that the impact was so severe that the victims' car was dragged for several metres by the SUV which also flipped on impact. The family from Haryana was travelling to Haridwar in two separate vehicles, one of which was involved in the crash. The deceased were identified as Sudesh Devi (70), Preeti (37), Shivansh (9) and Praveen Kumar (40).

The SUV driver, who was injured, has been taken into custody, police said.

According to family members, survivor Jaidev (who was in the other car) had been living in Bahadurgarh, Haryana, with his father, Charan Singh, where both worked in the transport business. The deceased, Praveen, was Jaidev's cousin.

In UP, trainee pilot hurt by running propeller; probe on

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow/New Delhi: A 22-year-old trainee pilot from New Delhi was hit on the back by a still-running propeller after stepping off a twin-engine trainer aircraft at Kanpur's Chakeri airport, prompting Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to order a probe and ground the plane.

Riya Batra suffered back injuries after deboarding Garg Aviation's Tecnam P2006T aircraft during a night training sortie Friday. The civil aviation regulator has off-rostered the instructor from flying training duties pending the probe and barred use of aircraft VT-NBV until the investigation is complete.

DGCA is investigating whether she stepped out on her own or was asked to do so before the engines were shut down. "After landing, the trainee pilot deboarded the aircraft with the engine running," DGCA said. "The cadet received injuries to her back after being hit by the running propeller."

A note submitted at the private hospital where Batra was admitted by a "friend" said she had suffered injuries in a Scooty fall, raising further questions for investigators.

Aviation industry insiders alleged some flying training organisations in India and abroad swap trainees between sorties without shutting down engines to save time.

A note submitted at the private hospital where Batra was admitted by a 'friend' said she had suffered injuries in a Scooty fall, raising further questions for investigators

Garg Aviation safety manager Group Captain Rajeev Bhalla said the aircraft landed around 8.40pm and was slowing to a halt when Batra "attempted to get out of the aircraft before both engines had been switched off", contrary to standard operating procedure.

Flight instructor Captain Raunak saw her trying to step out, "immediately shouted at her to stop and simultaneously switched off the engines", Bhalla said. Before the propeller stopped rotating, it struck Batra on her back.

Emergency medical assistance was arranged before she was shifted to a private hospital. Her parents reached Kanpur early Saturday.

Bhalla said Batra is likely to resume flying in 2 to 2.5 months.

25001/535/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
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email- serwsbd2003@yahoo.com

Letter No. 2992 Date : 24.06.2026

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH GePNIC e_Procurement Notice

1. Name of the work : Construction of Road Works - 2 Nos.
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3. Estimated Cost : Various from Rs. 159.56 Lakhs to Rs. 244.21 Lakhs (Approximately).
4. Details of projects : As per Annexure attached.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender Online for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
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Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda	CCERWCSBD - Online - 26/2026-27	01.07.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	18.07.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	17.07.2026 upto 2.00 P.M.	20.07.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	To be intimated separately

5. The details of works can be seen from the website **https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in**
6. Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender website.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda

OIPR - 25001/25182/1/26-27/0047

25001/536/2627

eMail : se_nerwkjr@rediffmail.com

GOVT. OF ODISHA
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RURAL WORKS CIRCLE: KEONJHAR

eProcurement Notice for Road Works under MMSY-TRIP, MMSY-CMRL, MMSY-Impvt. to Existing RD Roads & DRR

Bid Identification No. NCB-10/ RWCKJR / 2026-27

No. 3061 / Date : 20.06.2026

1. Name of the work : Construction and Improvement of Road Works under MMSY-TRIP, MMSY-CMRL, MMSY-Impvt. to Existing RD Roads & DRR
2. No. of work : 21 (Twentyone) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost : As per Annexure in NIT.
4. Class of Contractor (Eligible) : As per Annexure in NIT.
5. Period of Completion : As per Annexure in NIT.
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O C.C.E.R.W. Circle, Keonjhar	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Keonjhar	NCB-10/ RWCKJR/ 2026-27	Dt.01.07.26 at 11.00 A.M.	Dt.15.07.26 upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt.14.07.26 upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt.17.07.26 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

- Further details can be seen from the website : **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**

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WESTERN RAILWAY
CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)II, Western Railway, RATLAM (MP) invites **Tender No.RTM-RNQD-DyCE-C-II-02. Name of Work:** Construction of major and minor bridges, protection works & other miscellaneous works between proposed Nagda and Ratlam 3rd and 4th Line section in connection with Nagda - Ratlam Quadrupling Project of Ratlam Division - Western Railway. **NIT Cost:** ₹ 92,51,03,149.43. **Bid Security:** ₹ 1,85,02,100/-. **Bid Submission Closing Date:** On 20.07.2026 At 15:00 Hrs. **Bid Opening Date:** On 20.07.2026 At 15:30 Hrs. For further details please visit our website **www.ireps.gov.in** 0308

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HACK OF THE DAY — **UPDATE AADHAAR ADDRESS VIA FAMILY MEMBER**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Helps renters, students, and newlyweds update Aadhaar address without proof in their own name

WHAT TO DO: Use Aadhaar's Head of Family method with a relative's consent in the app

STEPS:

1. Open the Aadhaar app and log in with your PIN
2. Select Services, then Address Update and verify OTP
3. Enter the family member's Aadhaar and relationship
4. Complete face authentication and pay the required fee
5. Ask the Head of Family to approve in their app

NOTE: The address update fee is non-refundable and currently listed as Rs 75

SCAN FOR MORE HACKS

Tip from nehasaini1@timesinternet.in
Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, FARMAAN FAHIM AHMED KHAN S/O FAHIM AKTAR AHMED KHAN, residing at No.20, 4th Cross, Kempaiah Block, J.C. Nagar, Bengaluru 560006 declare that as per my School Certificates, Adhar Card, PAN Card, my name is FARMAAN FAHIM AHMED KHAN and my father's name is FAHIM AKTAR AHMED KHAN. I state that in my Passport No.AF540525, my name has been mentioned as FARMAAN FAHEEM AHMED KHAN and my father's name as FAHEEM AKTAR AHMED KHAN. I, declare that FARMAAN FAHIM AHMED KHAN and FARMAAN FAHEEM AHMED KHAN are the same and identical person i.e., myself. I also confirm and declare that FAHIM AKTAR AHMED KHAN and FAHEEM AKTAR AHMED KHAN are the same and identical person i.e., my father, vide Affidavit dated 24th June, 2026 sworn before Notary I. KANIKHA RAJA.

I, Prashanth Vembar, S/O of V S Pramod Kumar, aged about 38 years, residing at No 306, Apoorva Meadows, Yelahanka, Bangalore, Karnataka 560094 do declare that Prashanth Vembar, Prashanth Pramodkumar Vembar and Prashanth V P refer to the same person. Henceforth, I will use Prashanth Vembar for all legal purposes.

I, Pari Jain, D/O Manju Ravikumar Jain, aged about 12 years, residing at Leela Palace No 4/6 G-002 East End Beemanna Garden, Shantinagar, Bangalore 560027 declare that Pari Jain and Pari Vishalkumar Patel refer to the same person. Henceforth, I will use Pari Jain for all legal purposes.

I, VENKATA RAJARAM RAMACHENDRUNI,S/O; SRIHARI RAO RAMACHANDRUNI, R/O: REA 403, Block 12,Purva Riviera,Near Spice Garden, Marathahalli, Blr -560037.Have changed my name as VENKATA RAJARAM RAMACHANDRUNI.

I, KATYAYANI RAMACHENDRUNI ,WO; VENKATA RAJARAM RAMACHANDRUNI,R/O:REA 403, Block 12, Purva Riviera, Near Spice Garden, Marathahalli,Blr-560037. Have changed my name as KATYAYANI PINGALI.

I Chittibabu Loganathan S/o Loganathan, aged 46 yrs residing at Valepura Dinne Valepura Bengaluru-560087 have changed my son's name Yesavanth to "YESHWANTH C" Vide affidavit dated 18/06/2026 sworn before notary Yankoba.

I, Vasanthkumar s/o Ganganna, Residing at No:107, Sunnagatta Village Alurdud-danahalli post Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural-562110, I Have Changed My Father Name: SIDDAGANGAPPA to GANGANNA,

I, Vora Himaben Ashvinkumar , W/O; Brijeshkumar Arvindbhai Savaj, R/O: B-1309, Folium By Sumadhura, Ramagondanahalli, Borewell Rd, Whitefield, Blr - 560066. Have changed my name as Hima Brijeshkumar Savaj.

I, Mohammed Hayath Amanulla S/o Mohammed Amanulla R/o No 53 2nd Floor Sajida Manzil 4th Main Maruthi HBCS Layout BTM 1st Stage, Bengaluru 560029. Changed my name as Mohammed Hayath.

I, Pookatil Avinash Nandakumar, S/o Pookattill Nandakumar Parameshwaran, R/o 3014,SS3, Sobha Hill View, Nagegowdanapalya, Bangalore have changed my name to Avinash Nandakumar for all purposes.

I Chittibabu Loganathan S/o Loganathan, aged 46 yrs residing at Valepura Dinne Valepura Bengaluru-560087 have changed my Daughter's name Branda C to "BRINDA C" Vide affidavit date18/06/2026 sworn before notary Yankoba.

I,CHANDER MOHAN,S/O; SATISH KUMAR GOEL, R/O; NO.204,TOWER1,MANA MACASA EMERALD,2ND FLOOR,SARJAPUR ROAD,BLR-560035. Have changed my name as CHANDER MOHAN GOEL.

I Seema Mann W/o Vineet Mann R/o 72 Chandramouleshwara Layout Hunsamaranahalli Bangalore has changed my name from SEEMA to SEEMA MANN for all future purposes

I, Mohd Amanulla S/o Abdul Hakim R/o No 53 Ground Floor Sajida Manzil 4th Main Maruthi HBCS Layout BTM 1st Stage, Bengaluru 560029. Changed my name as Mohamed Amanulla.

I, Abhilasha Srinivasa D/O Srinivasa R/O Tokatimmanadoddi Kaggalahalli Ramanagar 562112, changed my name as Abhilasha Ramesh

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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e-AUCTION NOTIFICATION

SALE OF 8 nos. LIG RESIDENTIAL FLATS SITUATED AT BLOCK NO.47 & BLOCK NO.59 AT NANDINI LAYOUT, SFHS EXTENSION, BENGALURU – 560 096

KSIIDC owns 8 (eight) LIG Flats, bearing Nos. LF-47/1, 47/2, 47/3, and 47/4 and 59/1, 59/2, 59/3, and 59/4 in Ground Floor of Apartment building, at Block No. 47 & 59, Nandini Layout, SFHS Extension, Bengaluru – 560 096 purchased from Bengaluru Development Authority for residential use for its employees. KSIIDC, Bengaluru announces sale through e-Auction of these Residential LIG Flats (8 Nos.), each flat measuring 41.83 sq.mtrs. on **"AS IS WHERE IS AND WHATEVER THERE IS CONDITION BASIS".**

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b) Last date & time to express interest for participation in e-auction: **13.07.2026, 5.00 p.m. IST**

c) Date of commencement of Live Bidding: **29.07.2026, 11.00 a.m. IST**

d) Last date for bid closing: **30.07.2026 up to 11.00 a.m. (Delta time 5.00 minutes)**

Terms and Conditions of sale: General Terms and Conditions for e-Auction and other details, log on to **https://ksiidc.karnataka.gov.in** and **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Please contact e-procurement help desk Karnataka Public Procurement Portal, Centre for e-Governance, M.S. Building, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Gate No.2, Room No.146, 146A, 108, situated in 1st and Ground Floor, MS building, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru 560 001. Tel.No. 080 46010000 / 080 68948777 or take hands on training at e-procurement cell room.

KSIIDC Flats related queries contact Deputy General Manager, KSIIDC: **Mobile No. 98458 33566.**

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The two Koreas lead the world in life expectancy gains

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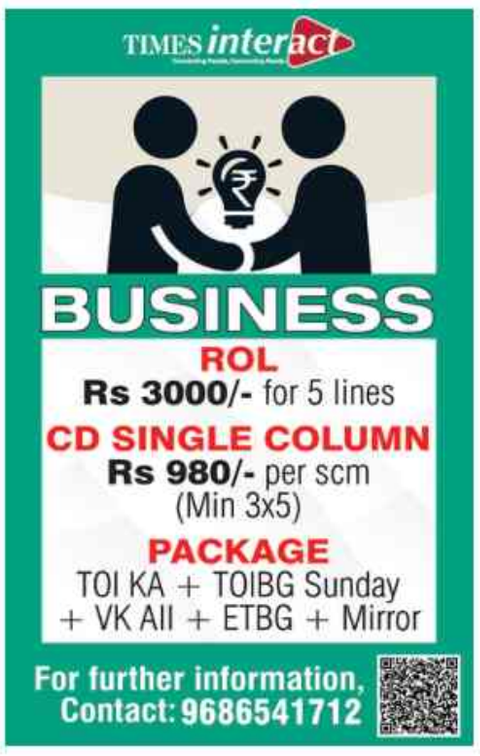
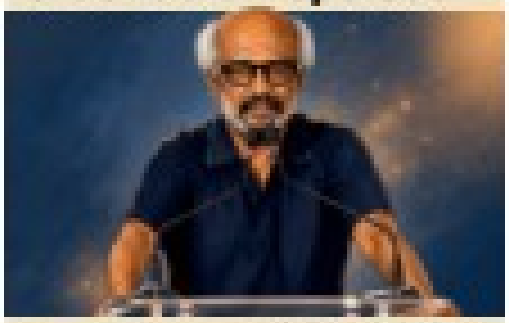


Even if I were in a room full of musicians, I think I'd always come back to AR Rahman: Imtiaz Ali

Rajini should not be defined by the politics that he didn't pursue



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CLAT final counselling round left 177 seats vacant, as faculty to survey NLUs, as establishment bottlenecks exposed gaps and choice among top aspirants

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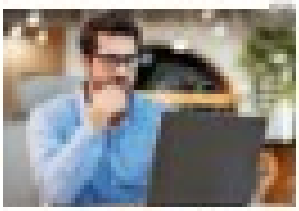

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7-yr-old dies after teen injects him with livestock oxytocin shot

Bijnor: A seven-year-old boy died during treatment in Meerut after a 14-year-old boy allegedly injected him with an oxytocin shot used for livestock. The incident happened after the 14-year-old was accused of assaulting the seven-year-old boy's elder sister, **reports Harveer Dabas**. According to a police complaint filed by the boy's father, the issue was triggered when his 13-year-old daughter was returning home from a madrassa in Bijnor on June 25 and was allegedly assaulted by the 14-year-old boy. His wife and their seven-year-old son soon reached the place to intervene.

The family alleged that the accused – to take "revenge" after being accused of the assault – dragged the seven-year-old to his house and injected him with the oxytocin syringe on the evening of June 26. Oxytocin is commonly used on livestock in rural areas.

According to family members, the child showed no symptoms of immediate health issues. However, he started suffering from severe body cramps the next day. He was first treated by private doctors and was then admitted to Bijnor Medical College. Due to his critical condition, he was shifted to a hospital in Meerut, where he died on Saturday night. Circle officer Abhay Kumar Pandey said, "The exact cause of death will be determined once we get the postmortem report."

3 masked men burgle Twisha in-laws' home

Bhopal: Three masked men allegedly broke into the Bhopal residence of former district judge Giribala Singh and her advocate son, Samarth Singh, Saturday and fled with valuables, police said, **reports Ankur Sirothi**.

Giribala and Samarth are currently in judicial custody in connection with the suspicious death of Samarth's wife, Twisha Sharma. The case, which drew national attention, is being investigated by CBI following demands from Twisha's family.

According to Katara Hills police, the burglars entered the house through the first floor while two people, including a relative of the family, were inside. The occupants discovered the theft Sunday morning and alerted the police.

During the investigation, a police team intercepted three suspects near the house. The trio fled, leaving behind a bag believed to have been stolen from the residence. Police said the contents of the bag would be matched with the list of missing valuables provided by the family.

Cops have examined CCTV footage from the house. Officers said the case appears to be a burglary and there is no evidence so far linking the incident to the CBI investigation into Twisha's death.

Court relies on dying declarations to convict man in wife's murder

Nishikant.Karlikar
@timesofindia.com

Thane: Nearly six years after a young woman was set ablaze at her residence in Diwa, a Thane Sessions Court convicted her husband for murder, relying primarily on her dying declarations and other corroborative evidence. Additional Sessions Judge B.D. Shelke convicted Shahir Devram Parkhe (32), under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code for murdering his wife, Payal Arjun Vidhyasagar, and sentenced him to life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 5,000.

The court also directed issuance of a show-cause notice to a key prosecution witness who turned hostile during trial, asking why she should not be prosecuted for perjury.

According to the prosecution, the couple had a love marriage but frequently quarrelled as the accused suspected his wife's character. On the intervening night of March 17 and 18, 2020, Parkhe allegedly returned home under the influence of alcohol, poured kerosene on Payal after an argument and set her ablaze.

2 Mum trekkers killed, 18 hurt as minibus plunges into gorge

Pune: Two people from Mumbai were killed and 18 others injured after a private minibus carrying a group of trekkers plunged 40ft into a gorge in the Pabe Ghat section in Rajgad taluka, around 40km from Pune city, in the early hours of Sunday.

The victims were among 20 employees of a private company in Andheri, Mumbai, who were on their way to Rajgad Fort for a trek.

The Pune Rural police identified the deceased as Vishwas Baburao Satim (25) of Nehrunagar, Vile Parle, and Dhwani Chandresh Thakkar (23) of Kandivali (West), Mumbai. Assistant police inspector Kishore Shevate of the Velhe police told **TOI** that the accident occurred around 1.50am at a sharp turn on Pabe Ghat. The driver allegedly lost control of the vehicle while negotiating the turn. The bus first crashed into the roadside barriers before plunging into the gorge. Bus landed on its side after falling into the gorge. The driver was trapped between the driver's seat and the dashboard. TNN

Government of India, Ministry of Railways
Railway Recruitment Boards

CENTRALISED EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION (CEN) No.02/2026

Recruitment of Technicians
(Indicative Notice)

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for various posts of Technician Grade-I Signal & Technician Grade-III given in the table below. The last date for submission of Application(s) is 29.07.2026. Applications complete in all respects must be submitted **THROUGH ONLINE MODE ONLY. (https://www.rrbapply.gov.in)**

Opening date of Application(s) : 30/06/2026
Closing date for submission of Application(s) : 29/07/2026 (23:59 hrs)

Name of the post	Pay Level as per 7th CPC	Initial Pay (₹)	Medical Standard	Age (as on 01.07.2026)	Vacancies (All RRBs)	Total Vacancies (All RRBs)
Technician Grade-I Signal	5	29,200/-	B-1	18-33 years	323	6557
Technician Grade-III	2	19,900/-	As per detailed CEN	18-30 years	6234	

Note:
1. Each Candidate is allowed to apply to only one RRB for a specific Pay Level, and only one common ONLINE application for any or all of the notified posts within the Pay Level.
2. A separate application must be submitted for each Pay Level.
3. Candidates are strongly advised to verify their primary details using Aadhaar, during filling of online application, in order to avoid inconvenience and delays due to special detailed scrutiny at every stage of recruitment process for non-Aadhaar Verified applications.
4. In order to achieve successful verification using 'Aadhaar', Name and Date of Birth in Aadhaar shall be got updated to match 100% with the Full Name and Date of Birth available in 10th class pass certificate. Similarly, Aadhaar needs to be updated with latest photo and latest biometrics (Fingerprint & Iris) before filling the online application.
5. This Notice is purely indicative in nature issued solely for the purpose of keeping prospective candidates informed about the forthcoming CEN and to be in readiness with necessary certificates and documents required for applying. It is also clarified that all terms, conditions, eligibility criteria, procedures and other requirements governing the recruitment shall be strictly as per detailed CEN No.02/2026 (along with any corrigendum, which may be issued from time to time) which will be published exclusively on the official websites of all RRBs listed below:

Websites of RRBs participating in CEN No. 02/2026
Centralized website- rrb.indianrailways.gov.in

Ahmedabad www.rrbahmedabad.gov.in	**Ajmer** www.rrbajmer.gov.in	**Bengaluru** www.rrbbnc.gov.in	**Bhopal** www.rrbbhopal.gov.in
Bhubaneswar www.rrbbbs.gov.in	**Bilaspur** www.rrbbilaspur.gov.in	**Chandigarh** www.rrbcdg.gov.in	**Chennai** www.rrbchennai.gov.in
Guwahati www.rrbguwahati.gov.in	**Jammu** www.rrbjammu.nic.in	**Kolkata** www.rrbkolkata.gov.in	**Malda** www.rrbmalda.gov.in
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No. RRB/TVC/CEN/02/2026
Date: 29.06.2026

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FORM-II

NOTICE UNDER SUB-SECTION (2) OF SECTION 15 OF THE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2003

1. The person above-named, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013 (the applicant) has made an application under sub-section (1) of Section 15 of the Electricity Act, 2003 for grant of **Category IV** licence for inter State trading in electricity **in all regions across India** before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi. The necessary details in respect of the applicant are given hereunder:

i) Authorized, issued, subscribed and paid up capital.
Authorized share capital : **Rs.3,000.00 Crores;**
Issued share capital : **Rs.869.64 Crores;**
Subscribed share capital : **Rs.869.64 Crores;**
Paid up share capital : **Rs.869.64 Crores.**

ii) Shareholding pattern (indicate the details of the shareholders holding 5% or more shares)
Name of the shareholder : **Honorable Governor of Telangana on behalf of State Government of Telangana**
Citizenship : **Indian**
Residential Status : **Resident**
No. of shares : **86,95,90,000** Equity Shares of Rs.10/- each
% of share of the total paid up capital : 99.99%

iii) Financial and technical strength. The applicant possesses distinguished financial and technical capabilities for power trading. Backed by a monumental Net worth of Rs. 7,105.71 Crores as per its latest audited accounts - well exceeding the regulatory benchmark for a Category-IV License - the applicant stands financially resilient. Complemented by a leadership team of distinguished power sector veterans with deep-domain expertise across diverse industry verticals, the applicant ensures impeccable technical and operational excellence.

iv) Management profile of the applicant including details of past experience of the applicant and/or the persons on the management of the applicant in generation, transmission, distribution and trading of electricity or similar activity. **Mr. G. Srinivasa Rao, Superintending Engineer,** has 35+ years of Power Industry experience and has degree in Mechanical Engineering from Nagarjuna University. He has served across multiple roles in power sector including Coal monitoring, Regulatory and Policy, Power projects, with overall responsibility spanning in tariff adoption filings of Thermal, Hydel and Solar, and Power Purchase Agreements business development. In his current role, he is responsible for arranging supply of coal to thermal stations, commercial activities viz., filing of petitions for tariff adoption for BESS, PSP, Thermal & Hydal Stations, true-up, Multi Year Tariff, Energy Billing, and Power Purchase Agreements etc.,; and **Mr. P. Ravi Sankar, CA, Deputy Chief Controller of Accounts**, is a qualified Chartered Accountant who completed his course from The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in 1999 and holds 26 years of experience in handling Finance and Accounts of Power Generation Company. He has successfully served across multiple roles in Finance and Accounts department of power generation company (APGENCO and TGGENCO) which include costing, corporate Accounting Policies and finalisation of accounts, Audit Management, Statutory Compliances, Taxations, system creation, MIS and Finance Management. In his current role, he is responsible for preparation of financial model, company's Annual Report, Annual plan, and controlling the financial requirement of the company and to ensure due compliances to the accounts of the company.

v) Volume of electricity intended to be traded during the first year after grant of licence and future plans of the applicant to expand volume of trading. During the initial year following the issuance of the trading license, TGGENCO proposes to trade a volume of 192 MUs. Future expansion plans include progressive, annual escalations in trading volumes, scaled in accordance with operational milestones and market dynamics.

vi) Geographical areas within which the applicant will undertake trading in electricity; Across all regions of India.

vii) Net worth as on 31st March of three consecutive years immediately preceding the year of application or for such lesser period as may be applicable and on the date of the special balance sheet accompanying the application;

As on Date	Net Worth
31.03.2023	Rs.6,534.68 Crores
31.03.2024	Rs.6,961.60 Crores
31.03.2025	Rs.7,105.71 Crores

viii) Year-wise current ratio and liquidity ratio of the applicant for three years preceding the year in which the application is made, or for such lesser period as may be applicable and on the date of the special balance sheet accompanying the application;

As on Date	Current Ratio	Liquidity Ratio
31.03.2023	1.04	0.95
31.03.2024	0.78	0.73
31.03.2025	0.66	0.60

ix) (a) A statement whether the applicant is authorized to undertake trading in electricity under the Memorandum of Association or any other document. **YES**
b) If so, reproduce the specific provision of Memorandum of Association or any other document so authorizing trading in electricity.
Sub: Objects III (A) **The objects to be pursued by the company on its incorporation are: Clause: 5: Power Trading.** Power Trading, exchange & licensing: To engage as a power trader, power exchange participant, or aggregator in electricity markets, including but not limited to the Day-Ahead Market (DAM), Term-Ahead Market (TAM), Real-Time Market (RTM), Green Term-Ahead Market (GTAM), Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) trading, and any other products, mechanisms, or contracts permitted by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs), or other competent authorities, in compliance with the applicable acts, rules and regulations, to facilitate efficient, sustainable, and competitive energy trading and aggregation and to undertake all auxiliary, incidental, and connected activities, including advisory, consultancy, and value-added services relating to energy market participation, as may be permitted by law.

x) Details of cases, if any, where the applicant or any of his associates, or partner, or promoters, or Directors has been declared insolvent and has not been discharged. **NO**

xi) Details of cases, if any, in which the Applicant or any of his Associates or partners or promoters or Directors has been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude, fraud or any economic offence during the previous three years preceding the year of making the application and the year of making the applicant and the date of release of the above person from imprisonment, if any, consequent to such conviction. **NO**

xii) Whether the Applicant or any of his Associates, or partners, or promoters, or Directors was ever refused licence, and if so, the detailed particular of the application, date of making application, date of order refusing licence and reasons for such refusal. **NO**

xiii) Whether the Applicant has been granted a licence for transmission of electricity. **NO**

xiv) Whether an order cancelling the licence of the Applicant, or any of his Associates, or partners, or promoters, or Directors has been passed by the Commission. **NO**

xv) Whether the Applicant or any of his Associates, or partners, or promoters, or Directors was ever found guilty in any proceedings for contravention non-compliance of any of the provisions of the Act or the rules or the regulations made thereunder or an order made by the Appropriate Commission, during the year of making the application or five years immediately preceding that year? **NO**

2. The application made and other documents filed before the Commission are available for inspection by any person with **The Chief Engineer, Coal & Commercial, Room No.255, TGGENCO, Vidyut Soudha, Khairatabad, Hyderabad – 500082.**
3. The application made and other documents filed before the Commission have been posted on **www.tggenco.com.**
4. Objections or suggestions, if any, on the application made before the Commission may be sent To The Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 6th, 7th & 8th Floors, Tower B, World Trade Centre, Nauroji Nagar, New Delhi- 110029, Email: secy@cercind.gov.in. within 30 days of publication of this notice, with a copy to the applicant.
5. No objections or suggestions shall be considered by the Commission if received after expiry of 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place:Hyderabad
Date:29.06.2026.

Sd/-
G. Srinivasa Rao
Chief Engineer, Coal & Commercial
TGGENCO

DIPR R.O.No.259-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/2026-27d Dt:27-06-2026

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by
V. Somanna
Union Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti

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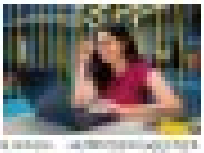
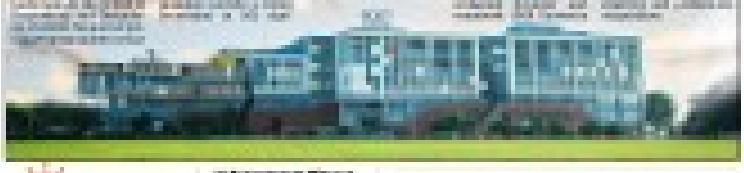
PUB/247/AAS/PRB/SWR/2026-27

CMR University expands AI programmes to equip students for emerging tech careers





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New research from the University of Cambridge suggests that most people may need to consumer more protein than current guidelines recommend (0.8g/kg of body weight) to support healthier ageing & boost cognitive performance

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

Which naturally occurring compound is responsible for turmeric's distinctive bright yellow colour and has also drawn significant scientific attention for its potential antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties? Send answers to **scienceofthetimes@timesofindia.com**

Rise Of The Machines | Automatons Are Beginning To Replace Humans In Battle & Heavy Industrial Scenarios

From Factory Floors To Frontlines, Humanoid Robots Gain Ground

Vijay.Anand
@timesofindia.com

In 1920, the term "robot" made its debut in a Czech play; 106 years later, robots made their debut on the battlefield.

This Jan, videos circulated online showing Russian soldiers surrendering to an unmanned, armed Ukrainian robot. About a month later, two humanoid machines became the first ever to be deployed in an active combat zone. They were sent to an undisclosed location on Ukrainian frontlines and evaluated by the US military.

Foundation, the two-year-old American startup that made the humanoid robots, signed a $24 million Pentagon contract in April and plans to roll out tens of thousands of units over the next few years.

Humanoid robots and cyborgs have been a sci-fi staple for decades, from RoboCop to the Terminator, from Star Trek's Data to the androids haunting the neon-lit streets of 'Blade Runner' in search of identity. But till now, they were intangible, always just out of reach.

Where the Ukrainian robot looked crude and improvised, Foundation's robot, Phantom Mk1, closely resembles the Star Wars battle droid, replete with a forward-leaning head, a featureless face and a tactical, utilitarian frame — at once sufficiently alien and unsettlingly human.

This jump from the theatre of the imagination to the theatre of war might seem absurd, but military conflict has always accelerated technological innovations: radar, jet engines, satellites, the internet and drones are all products of war. Foundation is simply striking while the iron is hot. "You need robots that can act in highly kinetic environments ... a robot that can take tumbles and falls, can carry a lot of payload, [and] is waterproof, dustproof," says Sankaet Pathak, co-founder and CEO of Foundation.

It took Foundation some 13 months, from its founding in 2024 to testing robots for the US military. And it probably helped that between 2024 and now, the world has constantly been on edge. "If it weren't for conflict, the desire to make big, drastic changes in the military is usually pretty low," Pathak says on USA's desire for non-human combatants.

Yet experts caution that the technology remains in its infancy. "It's not very mature, and it's not established. It may take a decade probably (to mature)," says Arshad Javed, associate professor of mechanical engineering at BITS Pilani, Hyderabad campus. Javed describes humanoid robotics as "very challenging", pointing to energy systems, dynamic balancing and cybersecurity as unresolved hurdles.

SOLDIERING ON

I think you'll probably have humanoid robots in some frontline applications in the next 18 to 24 months ... in five years is when you will start seeing these machines really scale

— Sankaet Pathak | CEO, FOUNDATION

The Phantom Mk1 is about six feet tall, weighs 80kg and can carry a payload of 40kg. It currently has a battery life of under an hour, but the next iteration (Mk2), to be unveiled soon, will last six hours, Pathak says. That battery life is significant. According to Javed, "energy is the backbone" of any autonomous robotic system operating without a tether.

Foundation says its robots will not be limited to the military and are the right fit for any heavy industrial use, like construction. Pathak says industry and military need mobility, endurance, payload capacity and dexterity. "The hardware problems you need to solve (for construction and military) are actually quite complementary."

Jacob Parakilas, a researcher with the not-for-profit RAND Europe, seeks to temper this. "Wheels and tracks are simpler, mechanically, than legs," he explains. This simplicity "gives them an inherent resistance to damage". They also help reduce a robot's visibility and exposure to enemy fire in combat. "[This] can be mitigated by engineering, but that adds to the cost and complexity."

Javed echoes that concern — "the problem becomes multiplied" when machines must balance dynamically on two legs while carrying payloads in unpredictable terrain.

Parakilas says robots such as Phantom need to prove their value in absolute terms to be worthwhile. "The rate of attrition of all types of systems in the Ukraine war suggests that the ability of a battlefield asset to be produced in quantity, maintained close to the front, and upgraded quickly and iteratively are all crucial to overall success."

Battlefields are incredibly hostile to sophisticated machines, with obstacles, shrapnel, debris, cyber-attacks and unstable communications. Javed identifies cybersecurity as a critical issue, warning that autonomous systems "cannot be fully autonomous, you need to somewhere communicate, and so on, and it can be hacked."

But resilient robots certainly are possible, says a professor of robotics at an American university, who asked not to be identified. Many of the component technologies behind humanoid systems already exist in increasingly mature forms, while advances in soft robotics, swarm intelligence and machine perception continue pushing machines closer to once-human domains.

Ethical questions remain on autonomous combat machines, and Pathak explains that the Phantom was developed as a human-in-the-loop model. "Before the Phantom performs any action, the humans have to sign off on it," he says. "All the decision-making still sits with the human."

Isaac Asimov imagined robots governed by moral laws written directly into their minds. Philip K Dick imagined androids struggling with identity and empathy. Somewhere along the way, machines have started walking into war.

COMBAT ROBOTICS

From drones to bomb-disposal units & more, machines are being designed for military use with the objective of reducing risk to soldiers

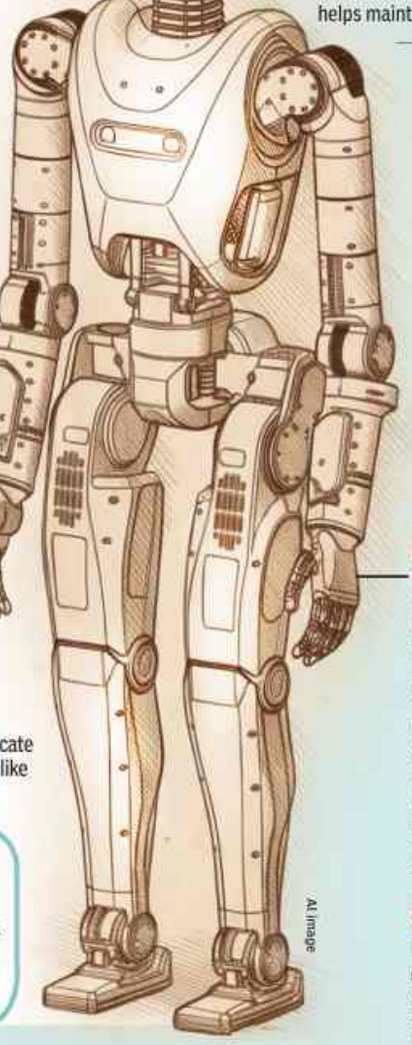
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) | Widely used for surveillance, target acquisition & precision strikes

Unmanned Ground Vehicles (UGVs) | Bomb-disposal robots, quadruped robot dogs armed with rifles & grenade launchers, these are being considered for urban combat & logistics

Autonomous Swarms | These advanced systems use distributed networks to communicate without constant GPS or radio signals, behave like synchronised packs for coordinated strikes

LICENSED TO KILL

Ukraine | On June 12, an official claimed that in 2024, Ukraine tested 10 autonomous drones in battle, killing Russian soldiers. This May, mass production started on a low-cost robot capable of wielding a machine gun



AI image

PHANTOM ROBOT Mk1 HOW IT WORKS

UPPER TORSO: COMPUTE & POWER HUB

- The torso houses processors, sensors, power systems, motion-control electronics
- It distributes commands to the robot's limbs in real time
- It also helps coordinate movement during lifting & walking

ARMS: INDUSTRIAL MANIPULATION SYSTEM

- Dual-arm setup built for handling physical tasks
- Each arm contains powered joints that replicate shoulder, elbow wrist movement. Artificial intelligence helps maintain movement accuracy

ACTUATORS THE ARTIFICIAL MUSCLES

- Actuators are motor-driven systems that generate movement in the robot's joints
- These systems convert electrical power into controlled mechanical force
- Phantom's actuators provide high torque, smooth movement, stable lifting, precise positioning & support dynamic balance

HANDS: HUMAN-STYLE TOOL INTERACTION

- Five-fingered anthropomorphic hands designed for human-compatible interaction
- The hand system enables box gripping, handle manipulation, tool holding & precision placement
- Finger movement appears independently controlled for adaptive grasping
- The wrist mechanism helps orient objects correctly

SENSOR NETWORK: REAL-TIME FEEDBACK LOOP

- Phantom relies on constant sensor feedback to coordinate movement
- Sensor data likely includes joint position, arm orientation, foot placement, body tilt, motion speed
- The feedback loop is essential for safe physical interaction and object handling

LOWER BODY: MOBILITY & BALANCE SYSTEM

- Legs designed for navigation in human environments rather than flat factory tracks
- Foundation, a US startup working on Phantom, states the robot is aimed at factories, confined spaces, uneven terrain

Why Don't Moons Have Any Natural Satellites?

Moons generally don't have moons because the planet they orbit exerts a much stronger gravitational influence than the moon itself. Any object trying to orbit a moon would be strongly perturbed by the planet's gravity, making its orbit unstable over time — such objects would either fall onto the moon, escape into orbit around the planet or be ejected entirely, leaving no stable natural submoon systems.

Adobe Stock

LUNAR MUSINGS

Earth and its Moon form a two-body gravitational system in which both bodies orbit their shared centre of mass, known as the barycentre. Earth doesn't remain stationary while the moon circles it — both bodies move in response to each other's gravitational pull.

The Moon is unusually large relative to Earth, compared with most planet-moon systems. As a result, the barycentre is significantly displaced from Earth's centre, and the motions of Earth and the Moon are strongly coupled. The barycentre lies approximately 1700km beneath the planet's surface.

Earth and the Moon aren't simply a planet and its satellite, but a mutually orbiting pair bound to a common barycentre. Even if they aren't officially classified as a binary planet system, they represent one of the closest such examples in the solar system.

(Russell Sceats, New Scientist, 2026, distributed by Tribune Content Agency)

QUICK QUIZ ON JUNE 15 **Our question: Which pre-launch critical test did Isro, preparing to launch India's first communication satellite APPLE from French Guiana in 1981, conduct by transporting the 600kg satellite on a bullock cart? Answer:** Telemetry, tracking & command system test

TIMES NATION

WB eyes 'no lawyer' clause in bill to curb gang crimes

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CM Suvendu Adhikari announced in his last assembly speech that govt was planning to bring a law to deal strictly with rioters and others who engage in violence

Kolkata: A clause in the draft of Bengal's proposed anti-syndicate law seeking 12 months' preventive detention of offenders prevents the latter from "ordinarily" engaging lawyers to argue their cases before the decision-making advisory board.

Section 10(4) of the West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-S\ocial Activities Bill 2026, likely to be tabled in the state assembly Monday, puts the onus on the board to allow a lawyer "in appropriate cases, and for reasons to be recorded in writing".

Section 10(7) reinforces the restriction, stating that "nothing" entitles a detainee to appear through a legal practitioner in matters connected with the reference before the board, but section 7 allows them to consult lawyers, making the distinction between legal advice and representation before the advisory board empowered to decide on detention and its duration.

Every detention order under the proposed law needs to be ratified within nine weeks by the three-member advisory board. The draft describes the board as the first authority to approach while challenging detention, clarifying that it can confirm or revoke any such order.

"Where the advisory board reports that there is sufficient cause for detention, the state govt may confirm the order and continue the detention for such period as it thinks fit. Where the advisory board reports that there is no sufficient cause for detention, the state govt shall revoke the detention order and cause the person to be released forthwith," states the bill. A confidentiality clause governs all board proceedings.

The proposed law covers any person or a member of a group, gang or syndicate that habitually commits, attempts to commit, abets, promotes, finances or facilitates anti-social activities, or has been named in a chargesheet under Sections 111 or 112 of BNS, or implicated under Arms Act, NDPS Act, Explosive Substances Act or Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act.

A detainee can appeal within 15 days of receiving a detention order. The state govt may "after giving such opportunity of hearing as it deems fit, annul, modify or confirm the order", the draft says.

Anyone convicted of shielding detainees will be liable for a jail term extending to three years along with a fine.

The proposed legislation is modelled on Gujarat's Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act, 1985. Copies of the draft have been shared with MLAs.

Former advocate-general Jayanta Mitra flagged the clause that bars legal representation as potentially contradicting an individual's "fundamental rights, based on unproven challenges".

Trinamool Congress has already branded the Bill "the 2026 version of the Rowlatt Act", the 1919 British-enforced law that allowed arrest without a warrant and detention for up to two years without trial. "BJP is now following the path once taken by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency... Those who will speak against them will be detained and labelled as goons," MP and lawyer Kalyan Banerjee said.

CM Suvendu Adhikari announced in his last assembly speech that the state govt was planning to bring a law to deal strictly with rioters and others who engage in violence and arson".

After rare stork rescue, PM hails fight against superstition

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi had a word of praise in his 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast for those who rely on science, experience and logic to challenge superstitions as he hailed a successful campaign led by a biologist in Assam to save a rare stork species which once faced extinction as people considered it inauspicious.

While the hargila plays a vital role in keeping nature clean, it was targeted for a long time because it was considered a bad omen. Even trees that had their nests were cut down, Modi said.

"A bird that helps clean the environment became a victim of people's fear. It was during that time that biologist Purnima Devi Barman resolved to change the misconceptions deeply rooted in people's minds. She spoke to women and explained the facts based on science," Modi said. Women in large numbers joined the conservation movement and are now known as "hargila army", he said. While these women initially faced resistance, they finally prevailed in driving away the superstitious belief. TNN

Isro a step closer to more powerful LVM-3 with crucial engine test

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Isro has taken another step towards building a more powerful version of its heaviest rocket, LVM-3, with the successful completion of a crucial test of a new semi-cryogenic engine that is expected to significantly boost the carrying capacity of future launches.

The test, conducted on June 24 at the Isro Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri involved firing the "Power Head Test Article (PHTA)" at 175 tonnes of thrust, or 88% of the engine's planned full power. It marks the highest thrust level achieved so far during the development of the engine.

Unlike a complete rocket engine, the PHTA contains almost every major component except the thrust chamber, where the actual exhaust flame is produced. Testing these systems separately allows engineers to verify that the engine's most complex parts, including the pumps, valves and fuel delivery systems, work together safely before assembling the full engine.

Isro

The test was conducted at the Isro Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri on June 24

This was the eighth hot test in the development programme. Earlier tests had been carried out at 94 tonnes and 120 tonnes of thrust. The latest trial was designed to study how the engine settles into stable operation immediately after ignition and whether it can sustain much higher power levels.

According to Isro, the test proceeded exactly as predicted. The engine's main turbopumps, which force propellants into the combustion chamber under extremely high pressure, also operated successfully, reaching outlet pressures of 400 and 500 bar. For comparison, that is several hundred times greater than the air pressure inside a car tyre.

The successful trial gives engineers confidence to move towards testing the engine at its full design thrust of 200 tonnes, an important milestone before the engine can eventually be qualified for flight.

The engine is being developed for a new semi-cryogenic propulsion stage, known as "SC120", which will replace the existing L110 liquid core stage on India's LVM-3 launch vehicle. LVM-3 is currently Isro's most powerful operational rocket and is used for missions such as launching heavy communication satellites and supporting India's human spaceflight programme (in a modified avatar).

Replacing the current core stage with the new semi-cryogenic system is expected to allow LVM-3 to carry heavier satellites into space. It is also expected to improve efficiency and reduce operational complexity. Isro plans to pair the new stage with an upgraded cryogenic upper stage, a combination that could substantially increase the rocket's payload capability.

Law must act as shield for innocent, not as sword in hands of vindictive: SC

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New Delhi: Highlighting that criminal proceedings cause social stigma and irreparable harm to the reputation and liberty of an individual, Supreme Court has said the accused must not be compelled to undergo the ordeal of trial when material and evidence do not establish grave suspicion of guilt.

A bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and P B Varale said that trial proceedings cannot be allowed on the basis of vague statements and quashed a corruption case against a govt official in Odisha after noting that there was no specific allegation against him."

This Court is further persuaded by the broader consideration that the criminal process must not be permitted to degenerate into an instrument of oppression. The law must act as a shield for the innocent, not as a sword in the hands of the vindictive. Where the material does not disclose the commission of an offence, the Court is duty-bound to interdict the proceedings at the threshold. The criminal trial is not a mere formality, nor a ritualistic procedure to be endured regardless of merit..." the bench said.

It said there must be clear and specific material that shows the accused might have committed the crime before trial proceedings are initiated. Bench noted that the allegation against the accused was wide enough to implicate several people, without regard to individual acts or culpability, which is impermissible under law.

"We are of the opinion that the presence of general allegations, without any overt act or specific imputations against the accused, cannot be sufficient to proceed to trial. The law is well settled that at the stage of consideration of discharge, though a detailed appreciation of evidence is not warranted, the Court must be satisfied that there exists sufficient ground for proceeding against the accused," court said.

"...In this case, the material does not show any direct involvement of the Appellant in the crime. The accusations are made against a group of people together and do not explain what exactly the Appellant is supposed to have done. Such broad and general claims, without mentioning the Appellant's individual role, are not enough to continue with the trial," it said.

PM backs scholarly debates as model for dialogue

New Delhi: With Central Sanskrit University launching B.Tech course in AI and Data Science to focus on Indian traditional knowledge and Nalanda University turning 'Shastrarth' (scholarly debates) into a convocation practice, Prime Minister Modi Sunday used his 'Mann Ki Baat' programme to project India's classical knowledge traditions as a living resource for the technology age and not a museum-piece inheritance.

Nalanda University has revived the ancient Indian tradition of 'Shastrarth', which is not merely a medium for expressing one's views but a disciplined process of dialogue, debate and deep contemplation, he said. TNN

GE ups price 3x, talks on advanced medium combat jets' engines stalled

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New Delhi: India's negotiations with the US's General Electric (GE) have hit a roadblock after the cost of the F414 fighter jet engine, proposed for India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), rose sharply, raising concerns about timelines for the country's most ambitious fifth-generation fighter programme.

"The F414 engine was initially estimated to cost around Rs 70-80 crore per unit, but GE has now quoted prices almost three times higher," a DRDO source told **TOI**.

Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), the nodal agency for the AMCA project, requires 15 F414 engines for five flying prototypes. As ADA has frozen the airframe design of the AMCA around the engine, GE knows India's engine options for its new stealth aircraft are limited.

The first batch of the fighter is expected to be ready around 2034

As India's own Kaveri engine project is no longer meant for the stealth fighter jet and is only confined to unmanned aerial vehicle Ghatak, govt, which kept an initial budget of Rs 15,000 crore for the project, is likely to face a cost escalation if it is compelled to buy the F414 engine at the higher price. There are also plans for the F414 engine to power the indigenous HAL-produced Tejas Mk-2 4.5-generation fighter jet.

Under the request for proposal issued last month, the industry partner selected out of three companies — Tata Advanced Systems, an L&T-BEL-Dynamatic consortium and a Bharat Forge-BEML consortium — is expected to achieve the aircraft's maiden flight within 30 months of signing the contract.

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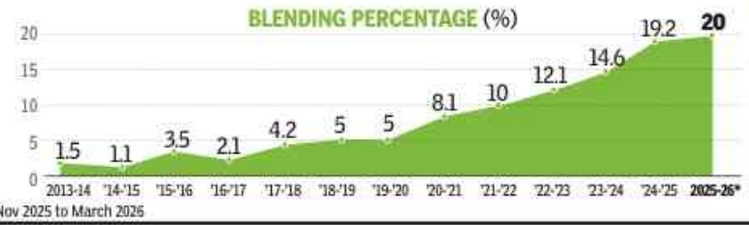
TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2026

India's ethanol blended petrol programme, launched in 2003, has evolved from inconsistent offtake to a stable, large-scale procurement and blending ecosystem led by oil marketing companies
The past decade marks the acceleration phase of the country's ethanol programme

Ethanol blending in Petrol (ESY 2014-15 to 2025-26*)



*ESY 25-26 covers the period between Nov 2025 to March 2026

TANGIBLE IMPACT AT SCALE

283 lakh metric tonnes of crude displaced through ethanol blending

₹1.7 lakh crore in foreign exchange saved by reducing crude imports

₹1.5 lakh crore paid to farmers through ethanol value chain

851 lakh tonnes of CO2 emissions avoided through ethanol blending

Source: KPMG

Belagavi firm seeks Anthropic IPO disclosure

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Belagavi: As California-based AI company Anthropic PBC prepares for a potential public listing, Belagavi-based Anthropic Softwares Pvt Ltd has approached the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), seeking disclosure of an ongoing brand dispute to prospective investors.

The Indian startup has urged the SEC to ensure that the legal proceedings and related risks are fully disclosed in Anthropic PBC's IPO documents. It has submitted details of the dispute, arguing that the litigation could have implications for the company's branding and business operations.

According to the filing, Anthropic Softwares, incorporated in April 2017, claims prior use of the "Anthropic" brand. The dispute is being contested on multiple legal fronts. A commercial suit is pending before the Principal District and Commercial Court in Belagavi, where Anthropic PBC's Indian arm, based in Bengaluru, has filed its objections.

The next hearing is scheduled for July 9. Separately, the Belagavi firm has approached the Registrar of Trademarks seeking cancellation of the trademark granted to Anthropic PBC. In turn, Anthropic PBC has opposed the trademark application filed by the Belagavi startup.

Monsoon uncertainty weighs on gains from lower oil prices

Cos Factor In Subdued Rural Spending In Growth Expectations

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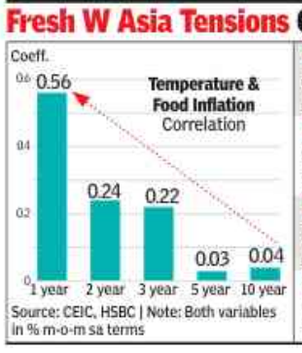
Mumbai: Oil prices have tumbled enough for some analysts to lower India's headline inflation forecast for the fiscal year, but uncertainty over the trajectory of monsoons is nudging consumer firms to temper their growth expectations. Companies with a wide footprint are hoping that a diversified product portfolio will help them offset some of the losses stemming from an expected slowdown in rural consumption.

Broadly, the consensus is that discretionary spending in rural areas will likely take a hit, but the progress of rains will be key to determining the extent of the impact. To give some context, rural India contributed nearly 60% to the country's overall consumption growth as of 2022-2023, said Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at Crisil, citing household consumption expenditure data.

Fresh W Asia Tensions Could Roil Sentiment



Source: CEIC, HSBC | Note: Both variables in % m-o-m sa terms

- Monsoon this year has had a delayed arrival & rains have been 43% below normal so far
- Companies expect discretionary spending in rural areas to take a hit
- Already, two-wheeler sales, a proxy for rural demand, are beginning to slow
- Growth rates may vary across rural regions based on monsoon performance

Monsoons this year have had a delayed arrival, and rains have been around 43% below normal so far, threatening kharif crop sowing. In Mumbai, where monsoons hit late June, the second-most-delayed onset on record, authorities have imposed cuts on water supply to commercial establishments. "Rural consumers may adopt a more measured approach towards non-essential spending until there is greater clarity on rainfall distribution and the progress of the crop season," said Mayank Shah, chief marketing officer at Parle Products.

A fresh flare-up in the West Asia region over the weekend could roil macro-sentiment, hurting prospects of long-term peace. "Any pressure on farm output and earnings is likely to weigh on rural consumption, with broader implications for FMCG demand and growth," said Piruz Khambatta, chairman at Rasna Group, which has recorded strong sales of summer products on the back of late onset of showers. While some degree of caution may be observed until rainfall patterns stabilise, rural consumption has historically demonstrated resilience when monsoon conditions improve over the course of the season, said Kaleeswaran Arunachalam, group CFO, Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals.

Development of El Nino conditions could potentially disrupt rural demand, impacting revenues of a large section of the corporate sector, which posted a healthy revenue growth in Q4FY26, said Icra. Growth rates may vary across rural regions depending on monsoon performance, said Jyotiroop Barua, business head, confectionary, at DS Group.

In fast lane: Electric PV sales may cross 3L in '26

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Chennai: India's electric passenger vehicle (EPV) market is expected to maintain strong growth momentum in 2026, with annual sales likely to exceed 3 lakh units for the first time, compared with just under 2 lakh last year. So far in 2026, registrations are closing in on the 1.5 lakh mark, according to Vahan data, reflecting the sales momentum.

The growth will be supported by new model launches, aggressive sales strategies by automakers, and continued improvements in charging infrastructure, which are expected to accelerate consumer adoption of electric vehicles.

Average monthly EPV registrations have risen to around 27,000 units over the past four months, well above last year's levels. With the second half of the year typically benefiting from festive demand and a slew of new launches, annual EPV sales are expected to cross the 3 lakh-unit mark.

CHARGING AHEAD

Electric PV sales (Jan-June)

2025	84,854
2026*	145,608

*As on June 28; Source: Vahan

Frost & Sullivan projects EPV sales to go past 3 lakh units in 2026 under its optimistic scenario.

Crisil has pointed out three structural factors driving EPV growth. First, the number of models has doubled to around 20 over the past two fiscals and is expected to exceed 35 by next fiscal, led by new launches in the sub-Rs15 lakh segment. Second, technological advances are easing range anxiety, with premium EVs offering 500–700 km per charge and mid-range models delivering 300–450 km. Third, longer battery warranties of 8–10 years and ownership models such as Battery-as-a-Service are reducing concerns over upfront costs and long-term reliability.

The rating agency also said rising fuel prices triggered by the West Asia conflict have improved the cost competitiveness of electric vehicles, with the running cost of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles rising 7–8% in May, thereby widening EVs' total cost of ownership advantage. Frost & Sullivan said continued fuel price volatility stemming from the US-Iran conflict could further accelerate India's shift towards electric mobility.

Better arbitrators, increased use of AI tool turn tide in NHAI's favour

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New Delhi: NHAI, which handles the highest number of arbitration cases among govt agencies, seems to have seen its fortune change in some recent outcomes due to a greater focus on quality of arbitrators, stricter monitoring of cases and use of AI.

Last week, an arbitral tribunal awarded Rs 1,202 crore in favour of NHAI in an arbitration case involving IRB, rejecting the concessionaire's claims. This is among the largest awards ever secured by NHAI in an arbitration. In another major victory, a tribunal recently dismissed claims worth Rs 8,375 crore filed by Soma-Isolux in the Panipat-Jalandhar highway project, while also awarding Rs 820 crore to NHAI on its counter-claims.

Officials said the agency's AI tool, Marg Sarthi, developed in-house analysed 149 arbitral awards delivered over the past 10 years and identified the reasons behind adverse rulings. The findings are now helping it prepare more effectively for pleadings and strengthen its defence.

MAJOR VICTORIES

- An arbitral tribunal awarded ₹1,202 crore in favour of NHAI in an arbitration case involving IRB
- A tribunal recently dismissed claims worth ₹8,375 crore filed by Soma-Isolux in the Panipat-Jalandhar highway project, while also awarding ₹820 crore to NHAI on its counter-claims

Currently, NHAI is involved in 140 arbitration cases in which companies have made claims amounting to around Rs 1.2 lakh crore, while the authority has filed counterclaims of Rs 65,000 crore. Officials said NHAI's victory against IRB in the long-running dispute over the Tumkur-Chitradurga six-laning project in Karnataka is particularly significant. The project, awarded in 2010-11 under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, required the concessionaire to pay an annual premium of Rs 140 crore, with a 5% annual escalation. Following repeated defaults, NHAI withdrew the premium deferment facility in 2019. Challenging the move, the concessionaire sought restoration of the deferment facility, claimed Rs 95 crore in compensation, and requested an extension of the concession period by 138 days. NHAI contested these claims and filed counter-claims seeking unpaid premium and revenue-share dues. In a majority decision, the three-member tribunal rejected the concessionaire's monetary claims, restricted the concession period extension to just 23 days, and awarded NHAI Rs 1,202 crore towards outstanding premium.

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Benchmarking Your Mutual Fund Returns

A mutual fund's returns tell only one part of the story. To judge whether a scheme has performed well, investors need to compare its returns with a benchmark. A look at what benchmarking means for investors and how to look for a fund that shows good levels of outperformance over the benchmark

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Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

What Is A Benchmark In Mutual Funds?

A benchmark is a standard against which a mutual fund scheme's performance is measured. Market regulator Sebi requires every mutual fund scheme to declare a benchmark index, regardless of its category. The benchmark acts as a yardstick that helps investors judge how well a mutual fund has performed. It helps investors see whether a fund has done better or worse than the market.

What Are Some Popular Benchmarks Used By MFs?

Most large-cap equity funds use the Nifty 50 TRI or sensex as their benchmark. Other commonly used equity benchmarks include the Nifty Midcap 150 TRI, Nifty Smallcap 250 TRI and Nifty 500 TRI. In debt funds, liquid funds are often benchmarked against the Crisil Liquid Debt Index, while gilt funds may use the Crisil Dynamic Gilt Index.

Why Are Benchmarks Important?

A benchmark acts as a reference point for both fund managers and investors. For fund managers, it provides a target against which they can measure the performance of their investment decisions.
For investors, it helps them assess whether a fund is doing better or worse than the market or the segment it invests in. Without a benchmark, it is difficult to judge how well a fund has performed.

Why Is Benchmarking Of Returns Critical?

Returns should never be viewed in isolation. A mutual fund is considered to have outperformed only if it delivers higher returns over its benchmark over a given period. For example, if a scheme generates a return of 16% after expenses while its benchmark returns 12%, the fund has outperformed.

What Level Of Fund Outperformance Is Deemed Good?

There is no fixed number beyond which outperformance over the benchmark will be good. Even a fund that beats its benchmark by 1-2 percentage points a year on a consistent basis can make good money over the long term. More important than one year's outperformance is consistency.
Investors should look for funds that have outperformed their benchmark across market cycles and over longer periods such as five and ten years. — PRASHANT MAHESH

Persistent set to be seventh largest Indian IT services company by revenue post deal

▶Continued from page 1

If the acquisition goes through, it would take Persistent more than halfway towards its aspiration of becoming a $5-billion company by FY31. The deal would catapult Persistent into becoming the seventh-largest Indian IT services company by revenue.

The Pune-based company has already agreed to acquire a 21% stake in Nagarro from its largest shareholder, Lantano Beteiligungen, and will subsequently make a voluntary public takeover offer for the remaining shares. The transaction will be executed through a newly-incorporated German subsidiary, Galaxy Germany Holding.

The acquisition is significant because it would rank among the first large-scale overseas takeovers in which an Indian IT services company acquires a European peer of meaningful scale, reversing the more common pattern of consolidation among European technology firms. Nagarro counts Siemens, Lufthansa, BMW, Maruti Suzuki, Bajaj FinServ, Assa Abloy and the City of New York among its key customers. Like the LTIMindtree merger and Coforge's acquisition of Encora Holdings, Persistent's bid for Nagarro is driven by three strategic objectives: gaining scale, expanding its Europe-an footprint and deepening its digital engineering and AI capabilities.

"We have always said we want to be the best technology services firm, not a general-purpose IT services firm. As a combination, we would look to be the second-largest business engineering player globally and the seventh-largest technology services company from an India-listed landscape," Persistent CEO Sandeep Kalra said during an investor call on Sunday.

Acquisition strengthens Persistent's Europe presence while advancing ambitious global growth plans

The transaction is being funded through a committed bridge financing facility of 1.4 billion euros from Barclays Bank, backed by a corporate guarantee of up to 1.5 billion euros from Persistent. Persistent CFO Vinit Teredesai said the debt would cost the company about 4.1%-4.5% in annual interest. Strategically, the deal gives Persistent immediate scale in Europe, where it has historically been underrepresented. Nagarro brings deep expertise in industrials, consumer, telecom, media and BFSI, along with capabilities in ERP and customer experience transformation. The combined entity would derive more than $1.7 billion of revenue from North America and over $600 million from Europe.

Explaining why Nagarro chose to sell, co-founder Manas Human said, "There were three motivations. One was access to capital, which is slightly more challenging in Europe because it doesn't have a deep tech sector or IT services sector. Second, we believe the new AI transformation era will create opportunities beyond digital engineering. It's about making entire companies more intelligent." However, experts said the deal presents challenges. It will materially increase Persistent's leverage and requires approvals from shareholders and regulators across multiple jurisdictions. Equally important will be the integration of two entrepreneurial companies with distinct operating models, cultures and geographic strengths to deliver the synergies that underpin the transaction.

Human, face behind $1bn German IT co Nagarro

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Bengaluru: The story of Nagarro cofounder Manas Human spans an unlikely arc — from the tea town of Dibrugarh in Assam and the classrooms of Delhi to the trading floor of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, where he helped build one of the world's largest digital engineering companies. Born in Dibrugarh, Human spent part of his childhood in Iraq before moving to Delhi as a teenager. He went on to earn a PhD in supply chain management from IIT Delhi and an MS in manufacturing systems engineering from Stanford University, where he received a fellowship from the Stanford Institute of Manufacturing and Automation.

In the 1990s, while in California, Human was fascinated by the world of software. "Everybody spoke the same language. Everybody spoke the language of code," he recalled. That belief eventually led him and a group of entrepreneurs to combine two small firms in a modest first-floor office and create a new company called Nagarro. The name itself came by chance. Looking for an available internet domain, the founders stumbled upon the word "Nagarro" in a novel by author Robert Ludlum. The book described it as "spirits emerging and spirits coming together."

"We thought it was a real word. Later we found out that it wasn't. We just liked the idea, took the URL, and that has been our flag for 30 years now," Human said. The early years were slow and painstaking. It took Nagarro five years to reach $1 million in annual revenue, 10 years to get to $5 million, 15 years to reach $20 million and two decades to cross $150 million.

> The most important thing is not roles or titles. The most important thing is that the baby that you have grown reaches great heights
> **Manas Human** | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, NAGARRO

Then came the inflection point. In the following seven years, Nagarro's revenue surged to nearly $1 billion, making it one of the fastest-growing digital engineering companies globally. The company historically operated under German IT services group Allgeier before being spun off and listed independently in Dec 2020. "We wanted to build the best engineering outcomes for our clients and work with the world's best companies," Human said. "Because we spent all that effort, we were able to ride that growth when the digital revolution took off. We designed around lean, small teams and highly skilled people, not staffing pyramids." That philosophy remained intact as Nagarro scaled, with the company continuing to operate through decentralised "two-pizza" teams and a non-hierarchical structure that preserved its startup culture.

Today, as Persistent Systems seeks to acquire Nagarro in a $1.3-billion transaction, Human says the timing reflects the next shift in technology. Explaining why Nagarro agreed to the sale, he said Germany's corporate culture takes a broader view than simply maximising price. "It's not only about the price. It's also about what is right for the future of the company, what's right for employees, and what's right for shareholders," he said. Human also has significant skin in the game. He owns a 6.2% stake in Nagarro and, together with other senior executives who collectively hold another 6%, the management team controls roughly 12% of the company.

Human's own story, however, extends beyond technology and business. In 2022, at the age of 50, he changed his surname from Fuloria to Human. In a deeply personal essay published on Germany's Unity Day on LinkedIn, he wrote that identities rooted in caste, religion, nationality and ethnicity were increasingly driving conflict and polarisation across the world. The name change, he said, was a symbolic attempt to affirm a simple belief, "Whatever other identities I may have, I am human first." As for the next chapter, Human has little doubt about his role. "The most important thing is not roles or titles. The most important thing is that the baby that you have grown reaches great heights," he said. "I am very much here."

AI enters cost-conscious era as enterprises chase returns

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New Delhi: The enterprise AI gold rush is giving way to a more disciplined phase. After two years of racing to deploy the biggest models and consume more compute, companies are asking a simpler question: is every AI rupee generating measurable business returns?

Uber recently acknowledged that internal AI coding budgets were exhausted much faster than expected as employee adoption surged, prompting tighter governance. Meta has made reducing inference costs a strategic priority, while Amazon, Walmart, Cisco and Uber have introduced usage caps or routed employees to cheaper AI models to contain costs.

The push for accountability is becoming visible in India as well. An EY-CII survey found 47% of Indian enterprises now have multiple generative AI applications in production, while more than 95% still keep AI and machine learning budgets below 20% of overall IT spending. A separate study by SAP found Indian organisations expect AI investment to rise 45% over the next two years, even as the focus shifts towards improving returns rather than simply increasing deployments.

"We're seeing diminishing returns becoming more apparent," said Sambhav Jain, managing director and partner at BCG India. Larger context windows, multiple AI agents and expensive inference often deliver only marginal improvements in output quality without corresponding gains in productivity, revenue or customer experience, he said.

> If you cannot draw a straight line from spend to value derived, you are not measuring ROI — you are measuring noise — DEEPAK DHANAK | CO-FOUNDER & COO, ROCKET

> The real risk isn't overspending on tokens. It's mistaking spend for strategy — and not having the measurement discipline to know which AI investments are actually paying back — MILESH J | HEAD OF STRATEGY & OPERATIONS, SAP LABS INDIA

Deepak Dhanak, co-founder and chief operating officer of Rocket — an AI-native platform, said the problem is not AI spending itself but spending without accountability.

"The overspend is not an AI problem, it is a measurement problem," Dhanak said. "Token consumption became a vanity metric during first wave of enterprise AI. Businesses now need to match the right model to the right task and measure outcomes, not activity."

The rethink comes even as AI investments accelerate. Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet and Meta were expected to spend roughly $320 billion on AI infrastructure in 2025. In India, a Z47-OpenAI-Zinnov study found nearly 90% of mature AI adopters have reduced some form of BPO spending, with over one-third cutting outsourced work by more than 25%.

The same study found 86% of Indian startup founders plan to increase AI budgets this year and more than half expect to more than double spending, yet only 9% have seen a measurable increase in sales or conversions attributable to AI. "If you cannot draw a straight line from spend to value derived, you are not measuring ROI — you are measuring noise," Dhanak said.

Executives say enterprises are increasingly asking whether cheaper models can deliver 95% of the value at 20% of the cost. "We're not experimenting with AI anymore — we're operationalising it. That shift changes the entire cost conversation," said Milesh J, head of strategy and operations, SAP Labs India. "The real risk isn't overspending on tokens. It's mistaking spend for strategy — and not having the measurement discipline to know which AI investments are actually paying back."

CONTRAPUNTO

There is no good and evil. There is only power, and those too weak to seek it

– VOLDEMORT (character)

Magnificus Leo

An American pope has emerged as the most compelling voice against America's wars

War is never blessed by God. Pope Leo XIV is really on a roll, repeating this message again and again, in case people miss it at first, which they tend to do. Why is it so hard to take in? Not because it's super complicated. But because we have become so used to hearing the opposite. Chaplains of different denominations, generals, and politicians citing sacred cause for the battle they've decided to fight, is the more familiar soundtrack. Iran war is a special case only because *three* languages of divine sanction are speaking here, each convinced that God is on its side. As Leo explained in his inaugural encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, this is the Babel syndrome. It negates synodality (walking together), fraternity, humanity itself.

Leo's theological vision is revolting to US's dominant Christian right. The cardinals who elected history's first American pope may well have counted on this: A strong moral voice to counterbalance aggressive Bible thumping by Republicans who love a war. A big gap between a tradition's deepest peaceable teachings and the militaristic ideologies that get built on top of it, is neither new nor unique to Christianity. *Bhagwad Gita* has taught nonattachment to many, as to Gandhi, but has also been quoted to justify violence. Zen itself got folded into the Japanese imperialist war machine. What's new, though, is unprecedented technological power, which can wreak dehumanisation at horrific pace and scale. Leo thinks it's this nightmare that's drawing us all towards certain artworks, like *Guernica* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. They're telling us to pause, really look at war's wreckage, and reach for peace instead.

At a Pentagon prayer service, evangelist Franklin Graham, speaking at Hegseth's invitation, asked the assembled troops: "Did you know that God also hates? Do you know that God also is a god of war?" It's painful irony how much this echoes the Ayatollahs' framing of things. And the settler ideology of Israel sounds similar too. Yes, such interpretations have always existed. In modern times, they've amounted to "third world war fought piecemeal", increasingly reducing peace to "a fragile interval between conflicts". But the threat of total devastation is now exponentially greater than ever. This is what makes the "just war" theory, abused to justify every kind of war, decidedly "outdated". Humanity cannot afford it anymore. Leo's message bears repeating by religious leaders across the earth. That God does not take any sides in war. God is incarnate in every person, different religions, after all, all say. That's the magnificence of humanity, *magnifica humanitas*.

Cup Of Life

WC 2026 shows why football, with joy and sorrow, remains a global pulse

Football is life. No other global game captures the heartbreaks, the joys, the tears, the desperation, the drama, the sorrow, and the pure exhilaration like the beautiful game. Take Iran. People are already calling them the unluckiest team in football. Just before the World Cup, the country was pummelled by US and Israel. There was little clarity whether the Iranian football team itself would be allowed to travel to US for the tournament. Then their training base was shifted from Arizona to Tijuana in Mexico. There were restrictions on their transit to US cities – the team forced to come into US just a day before their first two group matches, and leave immediately after the games.

Plus, Iranian fans in US stadiums were the most divided lot. Many turned up for the matches not to simply encourage their team, but also to denounce the Iranian regime. And yet, the Iranian team was a whisker away from qualifying for the knockout stages. Not once, but twice, there was heartbreak. First, a winning goal was denied against Egypt with scorer Khalilzadeh being ruled offside by millimetres, by VAR.

Iran could have still gone through. And Algeria's late goal against Austria – which many hailed as Algeria's 44-year-old payback for the Disgrace of Gijon – had the Iranians qualifying. But in the dying seconds, Austria equalised to dump the Iranians out. Absolutely gutting. But then there's the fairytale story of Cape Verde – the tiny African island nation that few had heard of before the World Cup. It is now the smallest country to make it to the knockout stages of the tournament, among the nine out of 10 African sides to go through. Goalkeeper Vozinha became an overnight sensation. His mother, who couldn't afford a visa to US but was later helped by a Chinese businessman, is part of a story that has entered World Cup lore. This too is the beautiful game. It makes us cry – both happy and sad tears.

Abnormal normal

The extraordinary is becoming the everyday ordinary

Jug Suraiya

When Russia invaded Ukraine and Ukraine fought back, the headline-making word was War. When US and Israel attacked Iran in a campaign that was supposed to be wrapped up in a couple of weeks, War made the headlines again.

After over four years of Russia-Ukraine hostilities continuing unabated, upper-case War has morphed into a lower-case has-been.

Much the same happened with the US-Israel-Iran imbroglio. A commentator noted the number of times that Trump has announced Iran's defeat (55), that a deal with the beleaguered country was imminent (38), and that Strait of Hormuz was about to have a grand opening, all welcome to attend (25). War began sounding like a bore, the repeated ceasefires turning into ceaseless firing.

While a patchwork peace has been struck between US and Iran, Israel's continuing belligerence threatens to make war the default option in West Asia. War, which ought to be an alarming aberration, has become normal, and peace, which should be the norm, has become abnormal.

What has happened to war has also happened to the weather. Increasingly frequent heatwaves, delayed and/or deficient monsoons, and other extreme meteorological events have made the abnormal normal, and the normal abnormal.

second*opinion*

Newsworthiness or its opposite, news-unworthiness apart, mathematically speaking the so-called normal is inevitably the abnormal. To arrive at the normal height for an adult Indian male as being 1.67m, would require taking into account men who are, say, 1.80m or more, and others who are 1.60m or less, and then calculate an average between the two extremes. Which while making mathematical sense becomes nonsensical, with exceptions that prove the rule outnumbering the rule they're meant to prove.

Etymologically too, the word normalcy is itself an abnormality. The correct word for normalcy as it is commonly used is normality. However, normalcy was used by Warren G Harding whose 1921 election campaign slogan, 'Return to normalcy' after the devastation of WWI and the Spanish flu pandemic, got him into White House, making him the 29th president of US. Thanks to that abnormality, abnormalcy has become the normalcy in everyday usage.

The Best & The Rest, So Far

As World Cup knockouts begin, Argentina, France & Spain look like frontrunners. Brazil & Germany haven't hit their full stride. England, as usual, is flattering to deceive

Sean Walsh

Columnist based in London

Heading into the first-ever round of 32 at a Fifa World Cup, we are starting to get a feel for who the true tournament favourites are.

The reigning champions, Argentina, have barely had to get out of first gear so far, mostly relying on their solid structure and the individual brilliance of Messi. No need to change a winning formula, right?

France's quest to become only the second team to reach three World Cup finals in a row has started positively, too. Didier Deschamps, long criticised for his conservative approach to international football (despite the positive results this has yielded), has taken the handbrake off, allowing the likes of Kylian Mbappé, Michael Olise, Ousmane Dembélé and Désiré Doué to all thrive together.

Doubts seriously began to corrupt the idea of European champions Spain conquering the world again, after they were held to a surprise 0-0 draw with African minnows Cape Verde in their first game. But once the mercurial Lamine Yamal returned to fitness, and the starting lineup, those concerns cleared to some degree. La Roja's superpower is the drive and penetration that can go with their supreme ability to keep the ball, and Yamal at full tilt is the perfect embodiment of that.

Argentina, France and Spain are largely following the script they set for themselves. They remain the teams to beat, appearing a class above to neutrals and diehards alike.

Meanwhile, Cape Verde themselves built on their remarkable draw to book their own spot in the last 32 against the odds. In fact, nine of Africa's 10 representatives have advanced to the next round, making up over a quarter of the participants still left in the competition. All three co-hosts – Mexico, Canada and US – have made it past the group stage in thrilling fashion, and are capitalising on World Cup fever.

And then we have England. Always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Somehow, the inventors of the beautiful game haven't been able to become the masters of it since 1966, and they have never won a major tournament which they didn't host.

This version of England has *arguably* the best striker in the game in Harry Kane, best attacking midfielder in Jude Bellingham, deep-lying midfielder in Declan Rice, and an assortment of other players ranging from elite to world class. On top of that, they also appeared to address their previous major weakness of a supposedly under-qualified manager, bringing in someone like Thomas Tuchel, who has achieved so much in the club game, and has a shout at being the top head coach in a crowded field at this tournament.

But what is there to fear about England? On paper, a lot, but the reality remains paradoxical. Bar a 20-minute spell in their opening win against Croatia, the Three Lions haven't roared into life. They've barely purred.

It was quite the comedown after displaying such exhilarating and energetic behaviour in that 4-2 victory in Dallas, pressing all over the pitch, and suffocating the life out of one of football's great overachievers. This result was followed by a drab 0-0 draw with Ghana, and their third group game, a 2-0 win over Panama, raised more questions than answers.

Tuchel's England are, at this moment in time, a better team in theory than actuality. They are merely an idea, not too dissimilar to their 'Golden Generation' of 2006, which featured superstars such as David Beckham, Wayne Rooney, Frank Lampard, and Steven Gerrard.

Back home in Britain, Tuchel has become the subject of ire for another reason. After the injury-prone Reece James was ruled out for at least two games, the debate restarted over whether Trent Alexander-Arnold should have been called up. The team's evident lack of creativity also saw cases made again for Cole Palmer and Adam Wharton.

This is quite typical of England, from the stodgy displays to the furore over squad selection. It's a cycle of negativity that Tuchel must break before it becomes terminal.

The saving grace for England is World Cups don't tend to be about how you start, but rather how you finish. They only need to look as far back as Argentina four years ago, when La Albiceleste were somehow beaten by Saudi Arabia in their tournament opener, before dominating the rest of the tournament.

Outside of the three favourites listed above, many of the other top nations have also flattered to deceive. Brazil and Germany look a level below their respective selves of yesteryear, while the circus that follows Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal will always threaten to derail their chances of glory. England might not be feared yet, but they also shouldn't be scared of many other sides left either.

Tuchel and Co have managed to avoid France and Spain on their side of the knockout bracket, with Brazil a potential quarterfinal opponent, and Argentina likely awaiting in the semis. Up first for the Three Lions is DR Congo, which represents a relatively kind matchup, before the possibility of facing Mexico or Ecuador at a boisterous Estadio Azteca in the last 16.

Across all sports, the best of the best find a way to improve as gruelling tournaments go on. And so it is for the final 32.

The writer is a football journalist

Many Hangovers Of India Going Dry

As El Nino hits hard, the worry is not only for Kharif, but also Rabi crops. With 40% of districts irrigation-poor, rural economy is at risk. And 166 key reservoirs are at only 26% of capacity. So, citywallahs also have cause to fret

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India is about to enter its most critical phase of the rainy season (July-Aug), which coincides not only with the maximum monsoon rains the country could get, but also the peak of Kharif (summer) sowing operation. What's worrying is how climatic phenomena will impact these two events.

IMD forecast isn't encouraging. Its prediction of 'below normal' rainfall, with 60% probability of its being deficient, has triggered a fear of drought. If this comes to pass, it won't hurt the farm sector alone, but also distress water reservoirs, groundwater recharge, and hydropower generation.

The country, as on Sunday, logged a deficit of 43% rainfall. Central India, which comprises most parts of the 'monsoon core zone', the rain-fed area where farming depends mainly on seasonal rainfall, recorded the highest deficit of 56%. Yes, this deficit will narrow down in July-Aug. But that by itself won't spare India from the ill-effects of a drought year, as the overall deficit during June-Sept monsoon season will likely cross 10%.

The two major factors – El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) – that govern variation in monsoon rainfall, may not help. El Nino – a natural climate pattern in which surface waters of central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean become warmer than usual – is associated with weak monsoon and harsher summer in India.

IOD, which describes the difference in sea surface temperatures between western and eastern parts of the tropical Indian Ocean, helps form stronger monsoon winds. Positive IOD helps soften the impact of a strong El Nino. Unfortunately, this climatic factor is currently neutral, and therefore it won't offset the El Nino that will prevail during the entire period when farming enters its critical phase.

Over the years, India has extended its irrigation footprint. But it still has miles to go, before it's drought-proofed against the vagaries of seasonal rainfall. Agri ministry has recently mapped as many as 315 districts (40% of total districts in the country) as suffering a greater risk of low rainfall and shortage of irrigation. Most of these fall in 12 states – MP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, UP, TN, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, AP, and Odisha. Except Rajasthan and AP, all these states are reporting a 30-80% rainfall deficit.

Sowing operations in most states remain sluggish. If this situation continues, its impact will certainly be felt on food-grain output, especially when farmers are already struggling with input (such as fertilisers and diesel) costs going up because of the Iran war. Maybe govt is helping on the input costs front in various ways. But rain deficit is quite a different challenge.

The resulting uncertainty has a direct bearing on rural economy. And depressed conditions in the farming sector ultimately impact the overall economy. That's why Pranab Mukherjee famously described the monsoon season (June-Sept) as India's true finance minister.

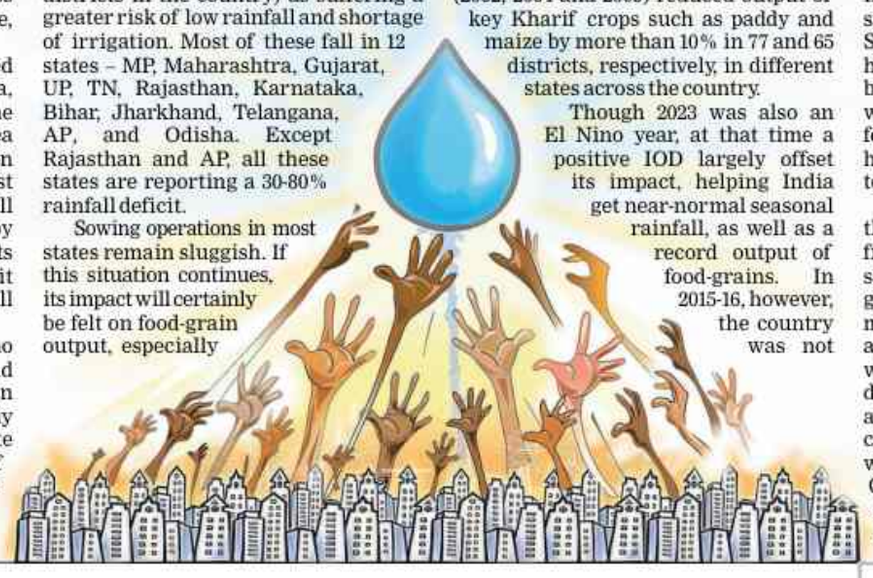
Impact of a poor monsoon on food-grain output has been well documented. For example, an ICAR-Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research study in 2023 shows that past El Nino years (2002, 2004 and 2009) reduced output of key Kharif crops such as paddy and maize by more than 10% in 77 and 65 districts, respectively, in different states across the country.

Though 2023 was also an El Nino year, at that time a positive IOD largely offset its impact, helping India get near-normal seasonal rainfall, as well as a record output of food-grains. In 2015-16, however, the country was not so lucky. It reported a 5% decline in overall food-grain output, due to a severe El Nino in 2015.

The impact is not limited to Kharif season. Since low rainfall results in less water in the country's major reservoirs and poor moisture content in the soil, it also impacts Rabi (winter sown) crops during the Nov-Feb period. Current status of 166 key reservoirs, monitored by the Central Water Commission, is worrying. Live storage, as of June 25, is at merely 26% of the total storage capacity of these reservoirs.

If it doesn't rain adequately during the remaining three months of the monsoon season, there will be a hit on drinking water availability, especially in big cities that depend on direct water supply for drinking and other usage. Since 20 of the above reservoirs are in hydro-electric projects, there will also be a hit on hydropower generation. It would be a kind of double whammy for the country's energy sector, which has already been under pressure due to the West Asia crisis.

When El Nino is out and about hurting the monsoon, with no climatic cushion from IOD, farmers will need the help of several contingency measures on the ground. In the longer term, they need much more advanced weather-based agro-advisory services and efficient water management. They also need drought-tolerant crop varieties. Many also need help switching to less water-consuming millets and pulses, from water-guzzling paddy and sugarcane. Only intensely more location-specific adaptation strategies will help minimise agricultural losses.



Calvin & Hobbes

WHAT'S WITH THE FACE?
I'M DOING STRETCHES.
CHEWING MAGAZINE SAYS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS WARM UP BEFORE YOU CHEW GUM.
DID YOU KNOW THAT NEGLECTING TO STRETCH THE TEMPORALIS MUSCLES IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF GUM CHEWING INJURIES?
WHAT ABOUT FALLING DOWN WHILE CHEWING AND WALKING?
WITH A GOOD HELMET, THE RISK IS SURPRISINGLY SMALL.

Sacred*space*

In football, everything is possible, from the moment you work and you believe in your qualities.

Kylian Mbappé

You Must Love The Goal And Surrender To It

Jaya Row

While civilisations focused on overcoming the external world, Indian thinkers turned inward, mastering the mind. Success and happiness followed as by-products. When we lost touch with this wealth within, external bankruptcy followed.

Like Gulliver bound by the tiny Lilliputians, we remain asleep to our own greatness, held captive by the distractions of the world. All we need is to awaken to the powerhouse of wisdom we are heir to. Gita, composed thousands of years ago, addresses the Arjuns of today – dynamic, ambitious young people striving for excellence. It offers a practical formula for success.

Many people are hugely talented. But discipline, hard work and consistent application are essential to translate this talent to success. You need to learn the formula for success. Otherwise, brilliant people often falter at the final hurdle. A well-prepared student suddenly freezes at an examination. A gifted athlete loses because of the obsession with the trophy. A highly qualified candidate fumbles during an interview due to anxiety.

Why does this happen? Focus shifts from present action to result. Action is under your control. Result depends on many factors beyond your influence. Dependence on the fruit makes you a slave to the world. Whether you will emerge a topper in the exam or win the Olympic medal depends on a host of external factors. But no one can take away the fact that you are an outstanding performer. Find fulfilment in the action. Give your best to it. Enjoy it. Then you are independent of the result. And success follows naturally.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Set your sights on an ideal greater than your personal ambitions. The nobler the ideal, the greater the energy, enthusiasm and creativity it unleashes. But if your mind is preoccupied with the goal while acting, attention shifts from the present to the future. Concentration slips. Action is flawed, and the result is failure.

The student anxious for marks is agitated, makes a series of mistakes and underperforms. The batsman in the nineties thinks of the century instead of the next ball – and gets out.

The secret is simple: while acting, focus completely on the action. Do not allow thought of the result to interfere with the task at hand. The mind is at peace. Action is perfect. Excellence follows.

To excel and be happy one must necessarily have a higher mission in life. Hard work must follow. Nothing worthwhile is achieved through lethargy and inactivity.

Gita outlined the six-point path to success. The formula consists of two parts – generating energy and preventing its dissipation.

Energy is created in three ways. First, the intellect directs all thoughts to the chosen goal. Just as light, wind and water gain power when channelled in one direction. Scattered thoughts lose their strength. Second, the mind is devoted to the goal. You must love the goal, surrender to it. Then the power of the goal becomes yours. Third, the body acts dynamically. The more you act the more vitality you generate.

Energy leaks away through three channels – regret over the past, anxiety for the future and frenzy in the present. The intellect keeps the mind anchored in the present, preventing it from wandering into wasteful avenues of past and future.

Jaya Row's commentary on Gita is broadcast on YouTube every Saturday, 6-7.15pm. Message 99200 54000

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2026

MY FAKE PLANTS DIED BECAUSE I DID NOT PRETEND TO WATER THEM
— MITCH HEDBERG

ELON MUSK POSTS BANNED FILM 'CITIZEN VIGILANTE' ON X FOR 48 HRS; FILMMAKER UWE BOLL SAYS SEQUEL NEXT YEAR

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN SAYS H'WOOD STUDIOS SHOULD TAKE MORE RISKS: 'AUDIENCE IS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW'

Iran attacks Bahrain, Kuwait after US strikes; threatens to end talks

Trump Warns Iran Would No Longer Exist If US Forced To Resume War

AP

Iran's FM Abbas Araghchi said that responsibility for returning maritime traffic in the strait to pre-war levels lay solely with Iran and urged others not to intervene

Iran said on Sunday it carried out a third day of retaliatory strikes against US attacks on Iranian territory, as both accused the other of violating their fragile ceasefire, straining negotiations meant to end the war in West Asia.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday they were taking measures to control traffic in the vital Strait of Hormuz and that violating vessels would be dealt with more firmly than before. The only authorised passage by Tehran passes through a corridor running along Iran's coast.

The Guards said they had also carried out retaliatory strikes in Kuwait and Bahrain. In a statement, they said the strikes "destroyed eight important US military facilities at the Ali al-Salem base in Kuwait and at the Fifth Fleet naval base in Port Salman in Bahrain". "Any enemy aggression, whatever the pretext, even against insignificant targets... will have a crushing response," the Guards said. Kuwait said it intercepted two missiles and there was no material damage or injuries. Bahrain reported a residential building had been hit, but said there were no fatalities.

The tit-for-tat assaults began on Thursday with the Islamic Republic striking a container ship, prompting Washington to hit Iran the following day. The US struck again overnight Saturday, after Tehran attacked a vessel carrying Qatari oil. Both sides blamed the other for breaching the truce.

"Iran was given a chance to honour the ceasefire agreement but elected not to," the US military's Central Command said in a statement posted on X on Saturday. "Commercial vessel transits through the Strait of Hormuz continue. US forces remain vigilant, lethal, and ready." The US said it struck Iranian military surveillance infrastructure, communications systems, air defence sites, and mine-laying capabilities.

US President Trump said Saturday that Iran would "no longer exist" if US is "forced" to resume the war. The threat came after US forces said they struck "multiple" Iranian targets Saturday in another response to attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. "US aircraft just struck Iranian missile and drone storage locations, and coastal radar sites, for violating the Cease Fire Agreement, AGAIN!" Trump wrote on Truth Social. "There may come a point when we are no longer able to be reasonable, and will be forced to militarily complete the job that we very successfully started. If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" he wrote. AGENCIES

Aramco copter crash kills 14 in Saudi Arabia; investigation on

A helicopter operated by Saudi Aramco crashed Sunday in the energy heartland of Ras Tanura, killing all 14 passengers on board. The crash took place at 6am local time, the Saudi Press Agency said, citing the energy ministry. It did not elaborate on the cause of the crash or the identities of the victims beyond the fact they were all Saudi nationals. Relevant authorities are investigating, it said.

Ras Tanura in Saudi Arabia's Persian Gulf coast is at the centre of the kingdom's energy industry, hosting the country's biggest refinery. Aramco had only just days earlier resumed loading crude at the terminals in the area for shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. It wasn't immediately clear if the incident on Sunday affected energy facilities. BLOOMBERG

33 people rescued, thousands still missing after Venezuela quakes

Caracas: Thirty-three people have been rescued so far this weekend after Venezuela's devastating twin earthquakes, the country's interim president said, including several children, while tens of thousands remained unaccounted for with time for finding additional survivors running short. The death toll from Wednesday's twin earthquakes rose above 1,400 as of Saturday.

Families and volunteers spent days pulling survivors and bodies from the rubble before the arrival of the more than 1,600 foreign rescue workers, often complaining of scant heavy equipment and a limited official presence, as hundreds of aftershocks deepened damage and kept residents on edge.

Although govt given a figure of hundreds missing or trapped, just under 50,000 people were listed as unaccounted for on a website promoted by the country's political opposition on Sunday. REUTERS

Putin says Russia is going through a difficult period

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday that Russia is going through a difficult period, but that it has taught the country much, state news agency TASS reported. Speaking at the conference of the ruling United Russia party ahead of parliamentary elections due for Sept, Putin wished the party, which he previously led, success at the polls, TASS said.

Ukraine, meanwhile, hit two Russian oil refineries in the regions of Krasnodar and Yaroslavl overnight, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday, as Kyiv ramps up pressure on Russia's fuel supply with its drone fleet. REUTERS

1,300+ excess deaths recorded in Europe's heatwave: WHO

AFP

On Sunday, French health officials said there had been around 1,000 more deaths than expected in that country just since Wednesday

The WHO said Sunday that over 1,300 excess deaths had been recorded in Europe since June 21 in connection with the record-breaking heatwave roasting much of the continent.

Tens of millions have been braving a weekend of extreme temperatures in Europe as a deadly heatwave moves eastwards, with some countries announcing rising death tolls and health services warning of saturation.

On Sunday morning, French health officials said there had been around 1,000 more deaths than expected in that country just since Wednesday. And across Europe, "more than 1,300 excess deaths have been recorded since 21 June linked to high temperatures in Europe", WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X. "Heat stress is often called the 'silent killer' - and European homes, workplaces and schools were not built for these temperatures," he said.

At least 191 million people are forecast to endure temperatures of at least 35°C on Sunday in Europe, with the heat particularly intense in Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, according to AFP estimates.

The Czech Republic set its second temperature record in two days on Sunday, with 41.1°C recorded in Doksany north of Prague, the meteorological institute CHMI said in a statement on Sunday.

In Sweden, several people were injured when they were hit by lightning at an amusement park, the country's TT news agency reported. Across Europe, the extreme heat has been followed by severe thunderstorms. By Sunday morning, the Nordic country had recorded 1,156 lighting strikes, according to public broadcaster DR. In Gohrischheide, in eastern Germany, a fire broke out in a large forest that's still contaminated with ammunition from World War II, which made the firefighters' efforts even more complicated. The big cities' fire departments were busy sending out ambulances to people suffering from heat-related illnesses.

The WHO chief said the UN health agency was "working with its member states and partners to address the health threats posed by extreme heat through focusing on preparedness, prevention and stronger health system responses". AGENCIES

'Lost my family in 1975, I don't fear death,' says Hasina

▶Continued from P1

Declaring that Awami League is not merely an organisation but a "force" and that any attack on minorities is an attack on Bangladesh's independence, Hasina, in an interview to NDTV, said, "My return is not a question of personal ambition. It is tied to a far larger question: the political rights of the people of Bangladesh, the restoration of democracy, the rule of law, and the spirit of our Liberation War."

On Hasina asserting "I will return to my country this year", members of governing BNP and opposition Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) sought to remind her of the death sentence she faces in "crimes against humanity" cases and the several trials pending against her.

"I do not fear death. In 1975, I lost my parents, my brothers, and almost my entire family... There was an attempt to kill me with grenades. Many conspiracies have been hatched against me. But breaking through every web of conspiracy, I stood beside the people of Bangladesh, she said, terming the death penalty verdict a "part of an illegal, unconstitutional, and politically motivated process".

Hasina also attacked the Tarique Rahaman-led BNP govt and previous Muhammad Yunus-led interim govt, saying, "There is no democracy. There is no rule of law. There is no security. The economy has weakened. Minorities are under attack. Extremism is spreading."

However, a source close to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said, "We are not concerned at all. She and her party men continue to repeat these statements, which may be tactic to exert pressure on us. But this is a govt elected with an overwhelming majority. People are with us."

JeI chief ATM Azharul Islam, however, questioned whether BNP was trying to rehabilitate Awami League. "You have called for banning Jamaat. Suppose we are banned. Who will fill that vacuum? Will you run the country alone? Do you want to establish a one-party rule? Are you trying to rehabilitate the Awami League?" he asked.

WORLD DIGEST

Skydiving plane crashes in France, killing all 11 aboard

Eleven people, including a pilot and 10 parachutists, were killed when a small plane crashed in the northeastern French town of Tomblaine on Sunday, narrowly missing nearby homes as their families watched, officials and a witness said. The aircraft went down shortly after take-off from Nancy-Essey airport, officials said. Some of the trainees' family members were at the small regional airport and witnessed the crash, interior minister Laurent Nunez said. It was not immediately clear if the extreme heat played a role in the incident, with the highest temperature ever recorded in Nancy — the city near Tomblaine — a day earlier.

At least 117 dead dogs found at California shelter

The remains of at least 117 dogs were found on the grounds of a California "no-kill" animal shelter, many of them with gunshot wounds, authorities said. The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office said Friday that it also discovered 21 canine skulls, hundreds of bones and other remains during searches at Miranda's Rescue Animal Sanctuary, a 50-acre facility in Fortuna, California. Investigators combing the site on Thursday located an area in a barn where they believe dogs were likely killed, the sheriff's office said.

Wangchuk joins Delhi CJP stir, begins fast

New Delhi: Activist Sonam Wangchuk on Sunday began an indefinite hunger strike at the Jantar Mantar protest by the Cockroach Janata Party to press for education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over alleged exam irregularities, with CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke saying they would also raise the issue of accountability in the electoral system.

Dipke said the protest, which began on June 20 amid the NEET paper leak row and other exam controversies, would not remain confined to education-related issues and that the platform would also raise other matters concerning accountability.

Explaining his decision to join the agitation, Wangchuk said education had been close to his heart for the last four decades and he could not remain silent when students raised concerns over the system. PTI

TET case: Cops hunt for Bihar man behind exam paper leaks

He's Involved In Leaks In 4 States For 25 Years

Pradeep Gupta, Priyanka Kakodkar, Swati Shinde Gole

3 IN POLICE CUSTODY

- 3 **arrested accused—2 from Bihar, 1 from Hry**—remanded in police custody till July 6
- Besides alleged **mastermind Bijender Gupta**, police also **looking for Kapil Dahiya** of Hry
- Investigators tracing **source of leak through unique QR codes** on every question paper
- Teacher assns, meanwhile, **renew calls to review policy of making TET mandatory** for promotion of senior teachers

Mumbai/Pune: The Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak case has widened into what police suspect is a well-organised interstate syndicate, with police identifying a Bihar man as the mastermind and dispatching teams across four states--Bihar, UP, Delhi & Haryana-- to dismantle the network. Meanwhile, Maharashtra govt assured candidates that the postponed exam will be rescheduled without requiring fresh registration or payment of fees.

Police suspect Bijender Gupta, a resident of Samastipur, Bihar, to be the kingpin; during interrogation, the three arrested accused allegedly identified him as such. Investigators claim Gupta has allegedly been involved in exam paper leak cases across Odisha, MP and Bihar for nearly 25 years, besides the latest state TET.

Teacher organisations renewed calls to review the policy of making TET mandatory for the promotion of senior teachers

A Bhiwandi court Sunday remanded the three arrested suspects in police custody till July 6, granting investigators additional time to probe the alleged racket after the Maharashtra State Council of Examination was forced to cancel the June 28 TET exam a day before it was scheduled, affecting more than six lakh candidates.

The case has been registered at Bhiwandi police station. School education minister Dada Bhuse said the state govt has taken the matter seriously and assured candidates that the exam would be conducted again without requiring them to submit fresh applications or pay exam fees. The TET was scheduled to be held at 1,028 centres across Maharashtra. "Strict action will be taken against the culprits," Bhuse said, adding that a fresh exam date would be announced soon. The controversy triggered political protests, with the Youth Congress staging a demonstration outside Bhuse's official residence and demanding his resignation. The incident has reignited debate over the state's policy of making TET a mandatory condition for the promotion of senior teachers.

Separate police teams have been sent to Bihar, Delhi, Agra and Haryana to trace Gupta, and arrest other absconding accused.

India, Seychelles sign an MoU for umbrella line of credit for ₹1,250 cr

▶Continued from page 1

India and Seychelles signed an MoU for an umbrella line of credit for Rs 1,250 crore. "India envisions an Indian Ocean where maritime security is accompanied by increased economic prosperity, where our partnerships are based on mutual respect and trust, not size, and where we move together, not side-by-side, with every country," PM said.

Modi noted that mutual trust and close cooperation have shaped a robust partnership spanning development cooperation, maritime security, technology, innovation, health and capacity building. He reaffirmed India's commitment to deepening the relationship, proposing direct shipping links, increased trade in local currencies, and greater connectivity to promote trade and tourism.

India and Seychelles also discussed a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. In his National Assembly address, Modi said the Global South is most impacted by climate change. "Its effects are already visible on our coastlines, in the marine terns, and in our communities," he said. He reiterated that countries which had contributed the least to climate change should not bear the greatest burden of its consequences, and stressed that climate action must be guided by "fairness, responsibility and equity".

"This is the essence of climate justice," he said, adding India would continue working with Seychelles to ensure that the concerns of Small Island Developing States received the attention they deserved. Herminie conferred upon PM Modi the Special Presidential Distinction "Guardian of the Blue Horizon", the highest honour Seychelles bestows upon an international dignitary, recognising his leadership in sustainability, the Blue Economy, and ocean governance. PM said both shared the vision of a more inclusive world and of international institutions that reflected contemporary realities, reaffirming their commitment to advancing the interests of the Global South.

Modi becomes first to receive Seychelles' 1st Blue Horizon title

New Delhi: Narendra Modi on Sunday became the first Indian PM to address Seychelles' National Assembly and was honoured with the country's first-ever "Guardian of the Blue Horizon" distinction — twin firsts on a State visit that reasserted India's position as western Indian Ocean's security and development anchor amid China's expanding presence along key sea lanes.

Hailing Modi as an embodiment of "the spirit of the Guardian of our Blue Horizon", President Patrick Herminie said the honour recognised his leadership on sustainability, the Blue Economy and ocean governance. The visit is significant as it marks Seychelles' Golden Jubilee of independence and 50 years of India-Seychelles diplomatic ties.

"I humbly accept this honour and dedicate it to all those countries that are fighting the challenge of climate change and consider environmental protection their responsibility towards future generations," Modi said, calling it a challenge "we have to overcome together". TNN

Fast, prayers held in TN against FCRA Bill

Chennai: Special prayer sessions were held in churches across Tamil Nadu on Sunday to highlight concerns over Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (Amendment) Bill, 2026, reports **M.Yazhiniyan**.

Prayer sessions were organised in response to a call by Joint Action Forum on Minorities to urge the Union govt to withdraw the Bill that tightens the existing law and allows the govt to seize assets and properties of NGOs found violating the foreign funding rules.

Special prayers were held in churches of all denominations. P Wilson, who is also the chairperson of JAFM, participated at a prayer service at St Vincent's Ascension Church here. Speaking in the session, Wilson compared the FCRA Bill with the Enemy Property Act of 1968.

Govt widens fight on anaemia, adds low birth weight babies

Anuja.Jaiswal @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Low birth weight babies up to six months of age will be brought under the Centre's flagship anaemia control programme for the first time as govt overhauls its strategy to tackle one of India's biggest public health challenges, widening the focus beyond iron supplementation to include better testing, treatment, nutrition and digital tracking.

Union health minister J P Nadda will release the operational guidelines for the revamped Anaemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan Monday during the 16th meeting of Central Council of Health and Family Welfare. The revised programme replaces the existing Anaemia Mukt Bharat framework with a broader, technology-enabled approach aimed at improv-ing prevention, early detecti-on, treatment and follow-up.

Anaemia remains one of India's major public health challenges, particularly among women and children, and is associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, low birth weight and impaired child development.

A key feature of the new guidelines is the expansion of the existing 6x6x6 strategy into a 7x7x7 framework. Low birth weight babies have been added as the seventh beneficiary group, recognising the need to address anaemia from the earliest stage of life. A new "Eating Right" initiative has also been introduced to encourage the regular consumption of iron-rich and diversified diets, while strengthened monitoring through digital tracking has been added as the seventh institutional mechanism.

The guidelines also upgrade the programme's T3 approach of Test, Treat and Talk to T4 by adding 'Track' to ensure beneficiaries are monitored after diagnosis and treatment. For pregnant and lactating women with severe anaemia, or those who do not respond to oral iron therapy, intravenous iron treatment using ferric carboxymaltose and iron sucrose has been included as an important clinical intervention under the national treatment protocols.

AAP's Sikh MLAs, ministers to appear before Akal Takht today

Yudhvir Rana | TNN

Amritsar: Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, who has been facing the ire of the top Sikh clergy over a controversial sacrilege video purportedly showing him sprinkling liquor on symbolic pictures of revered gurus, announced Sunday that all Sikh MLAs of AAP and ministers from his govt, including the assembly speaker, will appear before the Akal Takht on Monday to present the govt's stance on the new anti-sacrilege law in the poll-bound state.

His statement came after a closed-door meeting with party MLAs in Amritsar to decide a course of action following directives issued by the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, on June 15. Both the Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) have raised objections to the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026, saying it was enacted without consulting the Sikh Panth.

Addressing the press, Mann said, "We bow to the supremacy of the Akal Takht. I even skipped the President's programme to visit the Akal Takht earlier. All our MLAs and ministers will submit their written replies and then present their side. Some ministers have specifically been asked to submit written explanations, and they will do so."

The CM rejected allegations regarding his purported appearance in the controversial sacrilege video that has triggered a political storm, reiterating that the video is fake. He said while he was not personally summoned, the MLAs would submit a written representation to the Akal Takht, which will include footages proving the video was fabricated using an actor wearing a customised mask. "We cannot even think of confronting or challenging the Akal Takht. I have said before that I am not the person in that video. Whatever decision the Akal Takht takes, we will accept it," Bhagwant Mann said.

Masterminds? Cops focus on 2 of 8 held in Ram temple case

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Investigators probing the alleged embezzlement of donation at the Ram Temple are focusing on whether two of the eight arrested accused — Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav and Anukalp Mishra — were the principal conspirators behind the theft.

While police have not officially identified either of the two as the mastermind, officers privy with the investigation said both have emerged as key figures.

Police are probing whether Tinnu and Anukalp played pivotal role in planning and executing the alleged embezzlement as they were considered close to senior functionaries associated with the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and enjoyed significant operational access to the temple's donation management system. Their position enabled them to exploit procedural loopholes in the counting and handling of donations, an officer said. Police are looking into the specific role of Tinnu, who allegedly had access to the keys of the temple's donation boxes. Sources claimed he had recently facilitated the induction of his nephew, Manish Yadav, into the donation-counting team.

"Inclusion of close relatives in the counting process helped create a coordinated network through which portions of the siphoned-off money could be diverted and shared," he said, adding that inclusion of relatives also reduced the risk of detection.

Probe is also centred around Anukalp who was part of the outsourced cash-counting team. Police are examining allegations that he influenced the deployment of his brother-in-law, Lavkush Mishra, to the counting unit.

Former temple trust driver among key conspirators

▶Continued from page 1

The probe is centred on alleged key conspirators Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav, a former driver associated with Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, and Anukalp Mishra, employed through a bank's outsourcing agency and entrusted as part of the team responsible for managing and counting cash offerings made by devotees.

Police first searched Yadav's home. The two-storey house in Swargdwar was locked until his mother arrived and opened it. Investigators searched cupboards, trunks and storage spaces, and questioned relatives about his assets and seized jewellery, documents and appliances.

The adjoining house of co-accused Manish Yadav was also locked. Police questioned tenants about his activities. At the residence of Anukalp Mishra, police scrutinised property papers and bank records.

A lst: Tourists drive into Ladakh lake, fined ₹2L

Naseer.Ganai @timesofindia.com

Srinagar: Four tourists have been fined a total of Rs 2 lakh for off-roading in Ladakh's Pangong Lake and other protected wildlife areas in the Union Territory's first such punitive action against such illegal incursions.

Four vehicles used during the trips over the past fortnight were impounded. A viral video showed one of them, a Toyota Fortuner, purportedly chasing a Tibetan Gazelle through Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. Gazelles are an endangered species. The vehicles were released Sunday after the visitors -- from Himachal, Punjab, UP and Chandigarh -- coughed up Rs 50,000 each.

In Ladakh, a govt spokesperson confirmed "strict action had started against the rising menace of illegal off-roading, including tourists driving cars in ecologically sensitive lakes and streams". The warning came with an appeal from lieutenant-governor VK Saxena. "While Ladakh warmly welcomes visitors, they must be responsible and environmentally conscious," the LG stated.

TOI

WILD RESERVE: Pangong Lake in Ladakh is a protected wildlife area

The violations were detected by wildlife officials during routine patrolling and social media surveillance.

The most striking transgression occurred on June 17 when the video showed the Fortuner being driven near Nurboo La inside Changthang sanctuary, with the driver purportedly chasing the Gazelle. Officials launched a search with police and traced the vehicle outside a homestay in Hanle on June 18.

'TN's south dists log 1,500 sexual crimes'

▶Continued from page 1

Blue covers online offenders, including online groomers, sextortionists and cyberstalkers, while cases involving alleged offences through homosexual dating platforms are marked in purple.

Black is for those accused of trafficking, running commercial sexual exploitation rackets and organised sexual-offence networks. Juveniles are categorised as silver, with police looking at counselling through parents wherever reform is deemed possible. The districts covered by the pilot project include Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. "We track the red and orange categories closely, especially their parole status," IGP Vijayendra Bidari said. "In some cases, we have started invoking Section 126 of the BNSS to make high-risk offenders execute bonds. We are also trying to get convictions in cases pending against them and pursuing cancellation of bail." Bidari said the state's southern districts report 1,500 to 2,000 sexual offences every year, including many involving relationships or marriage with consent where the girls are minors. Non-contact offences such as stalking and voyeurism are also common.

Code	Sexual Offence
Red	Dangerous sexual predator, gang sexual offender
Orange	Repeat sexual offender
Blue	Cyber sexual offender
Black	Organised crime, including trafficking
Silver	Juvenile
Purple	Homosexual crimes
Pink	Eve-teasers, non-contact sexual offenders
Green	Isolated, low severity

Spectrum, he said, would focus on repeat offenders and those construed as posing a higher threat to women's safety than others.

Whale calf stranded on Mumbai's shores dies

Vijay.Singh@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: A blue whale calf, about 25ft long, died after being stranded along the rocky Bandra coast on Saturday morning.

Veterinarians, officials from the forest department's mangrove cell and the civic body, and other rescue teams attempted to save it but failed. The carcass was recovered with the help of a crane for examination and later buried at Versova beach.

It's unclear why the calf beached itself. State agencies have launched an investigation into it. Whales can strand themselves due to severe illness, injury, disorientation, navigational errors, and human-induced disruptions. Sometimes, they can follow a distressed pod member into shallow waters.

Marine mammal expert Dipani Sutaria told **TOI**: "The blue whale is an endangered species. The veterinarian who checked the carcass said there were no external injuries. However, during monsoon, the mother whale and her calves may have been chasing a shoal of fish or plankton close to the coast, and this particular calf may have become disoriented and hit the rocky Bandra coast. It is also possible that the mother whale may have been injured after being hit by a large trawler and the calf, therefore, lost its way. Underwater noise disturbances, unhealthy biochemicals in the sea or predators like orca can also affect whales."

MARINE MYSTERY

N Vasudevan, marine biologist and former head of the state mangrove cell, recalled that in 2016, a blue whale had stranded itself on the Raigad coast. "Despite efforts to push it back into the water, it did not survive. More research can throw light on why whales get stranded."

Man wanted poison pills to kill 15,000: Cops

V.Narayan@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: The 39-year-old Pune man arrested for allegedly distributing pills filled with zinc phosphide to participants of a Muharram procession in Byculla last week arrived in the city about a fortnight ago and checked into a budget hotel in Dongri, said Byculla police. He then allegedly ordered 30,000 capsules and 50kg of zinc phosphide online.

"He wanted to kill 15,000 people with the pills," said an officer. Police seized 14,900 pills filled with the poison from his possession, which they believe were assembled in his hotel room.

Zinc phosphide is often used as rat poison and can be highly toxic to humans. The suspect, Fayyaz Premji, allegedly passed them off as painkillers and immunity boosters to the processionists.

Another police officer said at least 10 persons consumed the pills but only two approached police after displaying symptoms of poisoning. Police suspect the number of people who took the pills could be higher but they sought timely treatment.

Stud farms galloping in Gujarat, horse count doubles after Covid

Parag Dave & Parth Shastri | TNN

Ahmedabad: The post-Covid years have redrawn the map of equine breeding in Gujarat, with a horse country emerging on the Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar-Mehsana belt. A niche pursuit has turned into a fast-growing business, with stud farms reporting a steady demand for high-bred lineages and mares arriving from outside the state for breeding.

Dharmendra Patel, president of Equestrian Association of Gujarat, says the belt has over 4,000 horses. "Before 2020, the number would be 2,000 — it has doubled in just six-seven years," he says. Earlier, horse owners went to Rajasthan and Punjab to source colts and mares for breeding. The trend has reversed after the pandemic, with many farm owners raising Kathiawadi and Marwari purebreds. "This year, local farms hosted mares from Rajasthan, MP, Maharashtra and Punjab," says Dharmendra. Ronak Patel, a stud farm owner in Vadaj who has two stallions and three mares, says business is good. "Based on the demand and genealogy, the fees charged range from Rs 50,000 to Rs 2.5 lakh. Due to the popularity of the good breeds, many in the outskirts of cities are turning their land into stud farms," he says.

Behind the surge is a clear economic impetus, with rising input costs and uncertain returns in agriculture causing a pivot.

25001/555/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, RAYAGADA
Email ID-ccerwcrayagada@gmail.com

Letter No. 1908 Date: 17.06.2026

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING Through GePNIC
e_Procurement Notice

1 Name of the work : Bridge work for the Year 2024 -2025 & Road works for the Year 2026-2027 (Total Nine (09) Nos of Works)
2 Class of contractor : "B" Class , "A" Class & "Spl" Class of (Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authority.
3 Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs. 176.73 Lakhs to Rs. 614.21 Lakhs (Approximately)
4 Details projects : As per Annexure attached.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding From	To	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender Technical Bid	Financial Bids
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Rayagada	NCB-09 / RWCRGDA /2026-2027	Dt.29.06.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Dt.15.07.2026 Up to 5.00 P.M.	Dt.14.07.2026 Up to 5.00 P.M.	Dt.17.07.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

5. The details of works can be seen from the web site https://wwwtendersorissa.gov.in
6. Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender web site.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer,
RW Circle, Rayagada

OIPR-25001/25196/1/26-27/0024

25001/542/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE : SUNDARGARH
AT/PO - SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020, E-mail address - serw_sundargarh@yahoo.com
No. Tender Online - RWCCESNG - 13 of 2026-27, Letter No. 3489 / Dtd. 20.06.2026
e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Type of the Work : Building Works
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding From	To	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-13 of 2026-27	30.06.2026 11:00 AM	18.07.2026 5:00 PM	17.07.2026 5:00 PM	20.07.2026 11:00 AM	Will be intimated separately

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh
OIPR-25001/25133/1/26-27/0016

25001/547/2627 E.Mail – serwcirclesbp@yahoo.com

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. BRIDGE TNDER ONLINE RWCSBP-12 / 2026-27

1. Name of the Work :- Bridge Works
2. Total No. of works :- 10 nos Bridge work
3. Estimated cost :- Rs.278.89 lakhs to Rs. 794.87 lakhs
4. Class of contractor :- 'B' ,'A' & 'Spl.'
5. Other details :- As mentioned in DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding From	To
1	2	3	4
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur.	BRIDGE TNDER ONLINE RWCSBP-12 / 2026-27	29.06.2026 11.00 A.M	17.07.2026 05.00 P.M

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur

OIPR-25001/25091/1/26-27/0017

34001/401/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, KHORDHA (R&B) CIRCLE, KHORDHA
WORKS DEPARTMENT
Tender call Notice

E-mail: rbcirclekhurda@gmail.com
Bid Identification No. CCE-Khordha (R&B) Circle-05/2026-27 Memo No-1515 Dt. 16.06. 2026

The Chief Construction Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Building works as detailed in the table below:

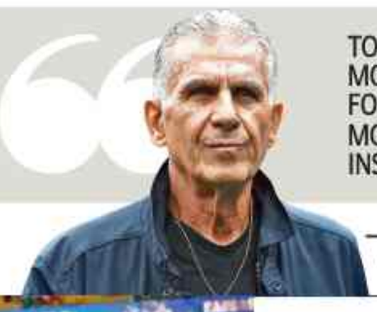
1. Nature of Work : Building Works
2. No of Work : 7 Nos
3. Tender Cost : Rs. 10000.00 (On-Line)
4. Class of Contractor : Special, A & B Class
5. Available of Bid document in the Website : From 10.00 AM of Dt. 30.06.2026 to 05.00 PM of Dt. 17.07.2026
6. Date of opening of Bid : Dt. 18.07.2026 at 11.30 AM
7. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website: **https://tenderodisha.gov.in.** Any Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha
OIPR-34001/34127/1/26-27/0006

GOAL RUSH

11 Jun 2026 – 19 Jul 2026

TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU
MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2026



"TODAY, MONEY TALKS IN THE GAME. MONEY TALKS. AND THIS IS CALLED NOT FOOTBALL BUT MONEYBALL. SO WHEN MONEY STARTS TO TALK, THE DECISIONS INSIDE THE PITCH START TO CHANGE."

—CARLOS QUIEROZ
GHANA COACH

TOP DRAW: Algerian (left) and Austrian players celebrate after advancing to the knockout stages

HITCHCOCK DRAMA OR PLAIN COLLUSION?

Austrian Coach Rangnick Likens 3-3 Draw With Algeria To Plot By Thriller Master; Others Cry Foul

Kansas City: Austria and Algeria played out a chaotic, thrilling — and hugely controversial — 3-3 draw on Saturday, a result that perfectly suited both sides, sending them into the World Cup last 32 and ending Iran's hopes of reaching the knockout stage as one of the best third-placed teams.

The prospect of a mutually beneficial result dominated the build-up, with both sides kicking off with three points and needing only a draw to advance. But there was nothing routine about a Group J finale that exploded into life in stoppage time with two goals and a frantic finish.

The drama reached its peak deep in added time when Algeria captain Riyad Mahrez sparked wild celebrations with what he thought was the winner, only for Austria to launch one final attack and level through Sasa Kalajdzic's header in the 96th minute, seconds after he came off the bench.

A second-string Argentina side beat Jordan 3-1 having already topped the group, while Austria finished second and will face Spain in the knockout stage. Algeria advanced as one of the best third-placed sides and will meet Switzerland. Austria now face European champions Spain in the round of 32 on July 2 in California.

Austria coach Ralf Rangnick scoffed at suggestions his side had played for a mutually beneficial draw. The dramatic finale, he said, was proof there had been no collusion.

"Most anticipated 0-0 or 1-1, and now it's 3-3. It's incredible. The locker-room is madness. If Alfred Hitchcock had written such a drama, I probably would have said he was completely mad," he said.

The match carried echoes of one of the World Cup's most notorious controversies, coming 44 years after the "Disgrace of Gijon", when Austria's 1-0 win over West Germany in 1982 eliminated Algeria and changed the tournament forever.

Rangnick maintained that the game's extraordinary finale should silence any conspiracy theories. "In this match, when you have a 3-3, nobody can assume that it was an agreement, and especially what we saw during the last 90 seconds," the 67-year-old said. "Three minutes to play, if somebody had said this would happen, you would have told them they were mad," Rangnick said, "I've been a coach for about 40 years and I don't even remember a match that had such a dramatic course and such an unexpected trajectory.

ALGERIA	3
Belghali 45, Mahrez 60, 90+3	
AUSTRIA	3
Arnautovic 28, Sabitzer 55, Kalajdzic 90+6	

The German rejected suggestions that either side had been content to settle for a draw, noting that players continued to push for a winner before Mahrez's strike. "All who watched the game during the last 15 minutes must know there is no hint that the players absolutely wanted to have a draw," he said. "I think they wanted to win.

"Nobody can tell me that suddenly in minute 93 somebody would plan: 'Oh yes, let's score another goal.' I think maybe it was the thought of one or two players in Algeria, but I think in the rest of the squad I don't think it was the case, and not for me."

In Kansas, Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" fittingly blared over the stadium loudspeakers after the final whistle as players from both teams celebrated qualification.

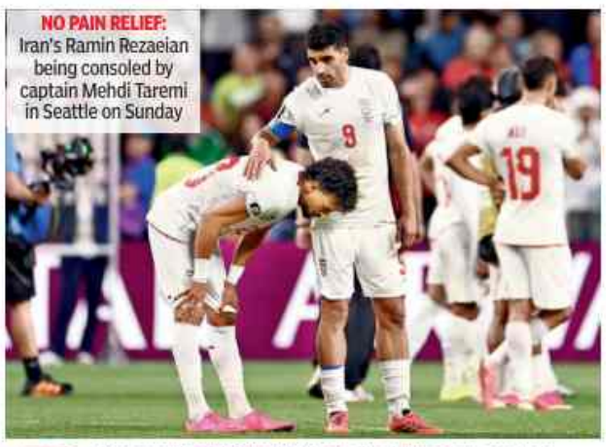
Austria opened the scoring through Marko Arnautovic in the 28th minute with the game's first shot on target. Algeria goalkeeper Oussama Benbot was hesitant off his line, allowing Arnautovic to steer the ball home.

The North Africans finally equalised in spectacular fashion through Rafik Belghali just before halftime. After Mahrez kept the ball alive near the byline, Belghali made a dazzling run past three defenders before unleashing a shot into the top corner, which Alexander Schlager had little chance of stopping, for his second international goal.

Rangnick's men reclaimed the lead through Marcel Sabitzer in the 55th minute when Konrad Laimer headed the ball down to his feet before cutting a bass back to Sabitzer, who fired home with his first touch from 18 metres for his 27th international goal. The Austria fans were still celebrating when Vladimir Petkovic's Algeria hit back soon through Mahrez.

Some frustrated fans headed to the exits fearing the match was drifting towards the kind of mutually convenient stalemate both teams said would not happen. That set the stage for a spectacular finish, with Mahrez and Kalajdzic exchanging goals in dramatic fashion. "You concede the 3-2 in the 94th minute and you think it's over — what more can happen?" Sabitzer said, "But then we still get a first clear chance. And we still believe. We send a long ball up to the two big guys and then header, header — and 3-3. It's unbelievable." AGENCIES

ANATOMY OF A 'DISASTER'



NO PAIN RELIEF: Iran's Ramin Rezaeian being consoled by captain Mehdi Taremi in Seattle on Sunday

"Disaster World Cup." That's how Iranian captain Mehdi Taremi described the ongoing event following their heartbreaking exit on Sunday when a questionable referring call finished off the Asian nation's hopes. The team had to deal with a lot, and the skipper was justified in blaming FIFA for the way they ran the event. In addition to Iranian woes, there were a few other controversies that created quite a stir through the group stages. **TOI** *takes a look:*

WHAT IRAN HAD TO GO THROUGH

- For the first time in World Cup history, **a host nation was in an active political and military conflict** with one of the participating teams, creating a unique diplomatic challenge.
- Citing security and logistical concerns, Iran **abandoned plans to establish its training base in the United States, opting to operate from Tijuana in Mexico instead.** The team also criticised the strict travel protocols imposed for matches played in the US
- **Visa complications reportedly affected members of the Iranian delegation**, while FIFA drew criticism for rejecting requests to move Iran's matches away from US venues
- **The goal that could have taken Iran to Round of 32** in the dying stages of their match against Egypt, too, was **controversially chalked off following VAR review,** which came under fire

NEW RED CARD RULE AND QUESTIONABLE DECISIONS SO FAR

- **Paraguay's Miguel Almiron** became the first player to be sent off under FIFA's **newly introduced mouth-covering regulation** during the South American team's 1-0 win over Turkey.
- **FIFA introduced the rule to stop players from hiding what they say** during arguments by covering their mouths
- **Lionel Messi wasn't shown a red card** for a studs up challenge from behind on Aissa Mandi during Argentina's 3-0 win against the African nation, the magician going on to score his first WC hattrick. **Algerian Football Federation filed a formal complaint**
- **Brazil's Vinicius Junior had a goal disallowed after a VAR spotted a foul on Scottish Jack Hendry,** which looked a very soft touch with Scotland players, too, not complaining. **The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) complained about the incident to FIFA,** saying it was "inconsistent"

SOMALI REF FEELS THE PINCH

- Somali referee **Omar Abdulkadir Artan** was set to become the first official from Somalia to referee at a World Cup. But he **was refused entry into the US,** and despite efforts through diplomatic channels to resolve the issue, FIFA was forced to remove him from the tournament roster.

INFANTINO-TRUMP FRIENDSHIP UNDER SCANNER

- **FIFA president Gianni Infantino** faced scrutiny over his close public association with **Donald Trump** before and during the World Cup. Infantino presented Trump with the **FIFA Peace Prize ahead of the tournament.**

Compiled by ***Diptayan Hazra***

Miguel Almiron

Croatia coach hits back at criticism

Dalic Praises Veteran Modric, Portugal Up Next For Vatreni

Philadelphia: Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic hit out at the team's doubters and said they were back to the Croatia of old after they snatched a 2-1 win over Ghana to reach the last 32 of the World Cup on Saturday.

The 2018 runners-up and 2022 semi-finalists lost their opening match 4-2 to England and produced an unconvincing 1-0 win over Panama before sealing second place in Group L with victory over the Africans. "It was a difficult match, but I think Croatia played an excellent match in a tactical sense and positioned itself well," Dalic said.

"I think we're back to where we were, like eight years ago. But that's again a small step to achieve the first objective, to go to the knockout stage."

The long-serving boss said there was a lot of "suspicion" about his team's quality after the early matches, describing some of the commentary as "pitiful". "This national team deserves better because we had so many fans rooting for Croatia," he added. "Even when losing or winning, they should be loved because of everything they have done for the country."

Luka Modric became the oldest player at a World Cup to provide an assist, according to data dating back to 1966, after curling in the corner that set up the winning header by Nikola Vlasic. The 40-year-old was also tenacious in defence. "Luka was fantastic... That's his character, energy," said Dalic.

Croatia will play Portugal in Toronto in the round of 32 on Thursday. REUTERS

Xinhua

MODRIC (L) AND VLASIC

40 Modric becomes the oldest World Cup player to provide an assist

CROATIA	2
Sucic 31, Vlasic 83	
GHANA	1
Luckassen 73	

Questions linger about England

East Rutherford: England ground out top spot in Group L after eventually seeing off a stubborn Panama side on Saturday, though Thomas Tuchel's team showed there is further work needed to be true World Cup contenders.

After launching their title bid with a chaotic but thrilling 4-2 win over Croatia, England found life far tougher against lower-ranked opponents Ghana and Panama.

Until Jude Bellingham broke the deadlock an hour into the 2-0 win over Panama, England looked in danger of surrendering top spot and complicating their route back to New Jersey for the final on July 19. It was never going to be easy for a team desperate to end 60 years of disappointment, but questions abound about England's staying power in North America.

"We had the goal in mind before the start of the tournament that we wanted to take it in sections. We've achieved our first objective, which was to win the group," said Bellingham.

"You want to try and craft your way through the tournament as best as possible. We've done that by winning today."

However, topping the group is hardly an achievement for a side that have reached the last two European Championship finals and the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup.

The Real Madrid midfielder knows the team must step it up though as a last-32 meeting awaits with the Democratic Republic of Congo, before a potential showdown at the Estadio Azteca with Mexico.

On Saturday, Marcus Rashford pitched a compelling case to start in the next round as a consistent threat down England's left flank, while Bukayo Saka delivered the corner that led to Bellingham's opener. AFP

Getty Images

11 **Harry Kane** bagged England's second goal to become England's all-time leading World Cup scorer with 11, going past Gary Lineker (10)

ENGLAND	2
Bellingham 62, Kane 67	
PANAMA	0

'Messi makes me speechless'

Reuters

MESSI SCORES FROM A FREE KICK

ARGENTINA	3
Celso 19, Martinez 31 (p), Messi 80	
JORDAN	1
Taamari 55	

Dallas: Argentina **coach Lionel Scaloni** said he is running out of ways to describe the performances of Lionel Messi after seeing his captain become the first player to score in seven consecutive World Cup matches in their 3-1 win over Jordan.

7 Messi is the 1st player to score in seven straight World Cup matches

Messi was introduced from the bench on the hour mark at Dallas Stadium and netted an 80th-minute free kick to continue a scoring run that saw him surpass the mark he shared with France's Just Fontaine and Brazilian Jairzinho. "It's a little bit of an uncomfortable situation when people ask me that and I don't know what to say," Scaloni said when quizzed once again about Messi's performance. "Today he could've played 90 minutes and, without undermining our opponent, he wanted his team mates to have time on the pitch and to save himself for what's coming up.

"He doesn't think so much about the numbers that people are talking about. Only word that comes to mind is I'm surprised." Argentina take on Cape Verde. REUTERS

Colombia top group after goalless thriller with Portugal

Miami: As Portugal and Colombia squared up for their final World Cup group game, top spot in Group K was on the line and the intensity on display from both teams matched the stakes in an entertaining but ultimately goalless draw.

The atmosphere in a full house at Miami Stadium tilted heavily in Colombia's favour, their supporters vastly outnumbering the Portuguese contingent as they imposed themselves, greeting every spell of Portuguese possession with a chorus of whistles that turned the stadium into a temporary home venue, as Portugal boss Roberto Martinez had predicted.

On the pitch, what stood out for Colombia was the collective understanding between the players, their movement co-ordinated without appearing rehearsed, each player creating space for the next pass.

Portugal's pressing structure was repeatedly bypassed, not through brute force but through Colombia's well-drilled timing, imagination and technical quality.

Portugal found greater balance after the hydration break. Bruno Fernandes forced Camilo Vargas into an excellent reflex save, while Joao Felix went close. The improved spell highlighted Portugal's attacking potential, even if it also exposed their vulnerabilities whenever they lost possession. Colombia, meanwhile, lacked precision in front of goal. Goalkeeper Diogo Costa, who was named man of the match, responded whenever required while Ruben Neves's goalline clearance prevented what appeared a certain opener. At the centre of nearly everything positive for Colombia was Jhon Arias. "We gave Colombia the match they wanted," Martinez rued. "A very open match."

Cristiano Ronaldo and Felix combined for what was their clearest second-half opportunity, only for the move to end with both a missed finish and an offside flag. REUTERS

Getty Images

ONE HUG, NO GOALS: Ronaldo & Rodriguez

PORTUGAL	0
COLOMBIA	0

CUP JOY FOR WAR-TORN DR CONGO

African Nation Reaches Knockout Stages 52 Years On With Their First Win

Atlanta: The Democratic Republic of Congo's only previous World Cup appearance left a shadow over the country's football history, but more than half a century later they wrote a new chapter in Atlanta by clinching a place in the knockout stages.

DR Congo players collapsed to the turf before celebrating a historic 3-1 win over Uzbekistan which sealed their spot in the Round of 32 as one of eight best third-placed sides. Their first World Cup was unforgettable for all the wrong reasons, but 52 years later Congo have made their mark on the tournament in the best way possible.

In 1974, with the country then called Zaire, they exited the tournament in embarrassing fashion after three defeats in which they failed to score and conceded 14 goals, including a 9-0 hammering by Yugoslavia.

In 2026, DR Congo had already restored their image in their opening Group K match with Portugal, scoring their first World Cup goal and earning their first point when they held their Cristiano Ronaldo-led opponents to a 1-1 draw.

A 1-0 loss to Colombia followed but the Congolese went into Saturday's clash with Uzbekistan knowing a win would see them advance and they duly delivered despite going in a goal behind at the break.

DR Congo arrived in the US on the back of an Ebola outbreak which disrupted pre-tournament plans, and little was expected of a side which needed 13 games to qualify, including an inter-confederation win over Jamaica after extra time.

Their debut World Cup came 14 years after independence from Belgium and following their first qualifying campaign. They went to West Germany on the back of winning their second Africa Cup of Nations, but those dizzy heights seemed unlikely to return. Until now, when this team have restored pride to a country scarred by decades of war, frequent political upheaval, and currently in the midst of a medical emergency.

DR Congo have made good use of their large diaspora. French-born Newcastle United striker Yoane Wissa, who scored against Portugal, netted twice and, with no fans allowed to travel from the country to the US, that diaspora was loudly present at the stadium. In 1974, they were Africa's sole representatives. Now, nine African sides have reached the knockout stages. DR Congo meet England next. AGENCIES

DR CONGO	3
Wissa 68 (P), 90+1, Mayele 78	
UZBEKISTAN	1
Shomurodov 10	

Getty Images

"There's a war in East Congo. Every day, every time we wear this shirt, we think about them. No matter what, we need to keep going. Because we want peace and I just say 'thank you'. Thank you because we came from far. We came from nothing to be here. We need to be proud." —WISSA

NZ's exit puts Oceania free pass in spotlight

Santa Clara: New Zealand's winless World Cup proved a let-down for a nation that had waited 16 years for a return to the global stage, and has shone a harsh light on FIFA's decision to give Oceania an automatic qualifying berth. The only Oceania nation with pro football, the All Whites were virtually guaranteed a free pass to the 48-team finals, having previously needed to qualify via intercontinental playoffs. REUTERS

SNAP SHOTS

India down Eng in shoot-out

The Indian men's hockey team defeated England 3-2 in the penalty shoot-out after a goalless draw in the reverse fixture of the FIH Hockey Pro League in London on Sunday. Abhishek, Shilanand Lakra and Hardik Singh converted their shoot-out attempts for India.

Nagal wins Intaro Open: Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal clinched his first ATP Challenger title in more than two years after defeating French qualifier Felix Balshaw 6-3 7-5 in the final of the Intaro Open clay-court tournament in Targu Mures, Romania. The triumph on Saturday ended Nagal's title drought at the Challenger level since his victory at the Heilbronn Challenger in Germany in June 2024.

Srikanth enters US Open final: Star Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth edged out Japan's Yudai Okimoto in a three-game thriller to progress to the men's singles final of the US Open Super 300 badminton championships in Fullerton. Srikanth, a 2021 world championships silver medallist, recorded a 22-20, 15-21, 21-19 win over World No. 33 Okimoto in 72 minutes to enter his first final of the season.

Zimbabwe dominate on Day 1: Zimbabwe took first-day honours in a one-off Test against Bangladesh on Sunday thanks to opener Innocent Kaia and left-arm quick Newman Nyamhuri. Nyamhuri took four wickets as Bangladesh collapsed to 140 all out after losing the toss at Harare Sports Club. An unbeaten 76 from Kaia then lifted Zimbabwe to 136/1. **Brief scores:** Bangladesh 140 in 47.2 overs (Mominul Haque 60, Shadman Islam 20; Newman Nyamhuri 4-61) vs **Zimbabwe 136/1 in 34 overs** (Innocent Kaia 76 batting, Brendan Curran 42 batting).

Zenit clinch big victory: Zenit Intl FA claimed a commanding 7-0 win over Revolt FC in the KSFA 'D' Division League football championship in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Other results: Amey FC 1 (Karma Lama 1) bt Elite Soccer FC 0; Power Play FC 3 (Aravind P Biju 27, Sujith Kumar V 31, 35) bt VPS Football 0; Mercurial FC 6 (Mithil Janardhan J 8, Adhil 14, Joshuva 20-P, Vishnu Vinod N 27, 50, Dhanraj P 38) bt KGF FC 0; William Sportz FC 2 (Dem nil Son S 18, 38) bt FC Real Bengaluru 0; TFF 4 (Musa 20, Sarvesh 34, Albert K 35, Albert 36) bt Team Plan FC 1 (Dhanjay Choudary 24); Mysore United FC 0 drew with Gajendra Nagar FC 0; Premier Sporting FA 3 (Zuhar Ullah Shariff 19, 20, Manginlen Haokip 38) bt Spodemy FC 1 (Akbar Basha 28).

AUSSIES KNOCK INDIA OUT

Perry, Gardner Come To Party As Harman's Effort Goes In Vain

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For large parts of India's final league match against Australia at the ICC T20 World Cup at the Lord's Cricket Ground on Sunday, it appeared the ODI world champions were on course for an epic win.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur produced a blazing 56 off 27 balls to propel India to a competitive 170/4, while medium-pacer Renuka Singh removed Georgia Voll in the opening over. The bowlers backed it up with a disciplined effort and, at the halfway stage of the chase, Australia were 72/3.

Then came a masterclass from two of Australia's finest batters. Ellyse Perry (56) and Ashleigh Gardner (53 n.o) stitched together a match-winning 100-run partnership for the fourth wicket to shut India out of the contest.

T20 WORLD CUP

Australia completed a six-wicket victory with six balls to spare to finish atop Group I and seal a semifinal berth. They were joined in the last four by South Africa, who had beaten Bangladesh by four wickets earlier in the day. Hosts England and West Indies progressed from Group II.

With Australia requiring 62 runs from the final six overs, India were still very much in the contest before unravelling under pressure.

IANS

LOSING CAUSE: Harmanpreet Kaur struck a fiery half-century

Shree Charani, India's standout bowler throughout the tournament, conceded 16 runs in the 15th over to swing the momentum decisively in Australia's favour.

Earlier, after opting to bat, India knew they would need an above-par total against Australia's formidable batting line-up. Backed by a partisan crowd that included Virat Kohli, Shikhar Dhawan and Ravi Shastri, the innings began brightly but never fully gathered momentum.

Shafali Verma made an entertaining 34 off 26 balls before losing her balance and being bowled. Smriti Mandhana managed 38 but struggled to accelerate, scoring at just over a run a ball before being run out following a mix-up with Jemimah Rodrigues. Jemimah looked fluent initially but found it difficult to break free as the innings progressed and was retired out in the 19th over in a tactical move.

Earlier, Harmanpreet walked in with India at 83/2 in the 12th over. Although wickets were in hand, time was not. After taking a few deliveries to settle, the skipper shifted gears. She got off the mark with a boundary over backward point off Lucy Hamilton and kept the scoreboard moving before launching a breathtaking assault on Australia captain Sophie Molineux.

Harmanpreet smashed three successive sixes — first straight down the ground, then over long-off after Molineux switched to around the wicket, and finally over extra cover — to bring up a half-century that briefly put India in command.

Her innings ended on the penultimate ball of the innings when she miscued a lofted shot to Perry at mid-off, but not before giving India a total they believed was defendable. But, it was another heartbreak for the Indians at the iconic venue.

Brief scores: India 170/4 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 38, Shafali Verma 34, Jemimah Rodrigues 34 retd hurt, Harmanpreet Kaur 56; Sophie Molineux 2-46) lost to **Australia 172/4 in 19 overs** (Ashleigh Gardner 53, Ellyse Perry 56). **Bangladesh: 117/5 in 20 overs** (Sobhana Mostary 42, Nigar Sultana 32; Nonkululeko Mlaba 2-22) lost to **South Africa: 118/6 in 19.2 overs** (Annerie Dercksen 45; Nahida Akter 2-24)

In a brutal summer, Big W drops

All Eyes On Sinner And Sabalenka

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London: Jannik Sinner arrived at Wimbledon having left little to chance. After his dramatic collapse in the second-round of the French Open, where he stood on the threshold of victory before melting in the heat, the 24-year-old underwent a battery of tests to understand what his body had been trying to tell him. He responded by training longer, in testing conditions and resisted the temptation to crowd his schedule with tournaments.

Still, as temperatures are forecast to climb above 30°C during the second week of The Championships, that episode — where Sinner appeared in complete control against Juan Manuel Cerundolo, leading 6-3, 6-2, 5-1 before his energy levels dropped alarmingly — has reopened lingering questions.

WIMBLEDON

Former Davis Cupper and commentator Prahlad Srinath points at the early part of Sinner's season, during which he claimed a historic five consecutive Masters titles between March and May.

"Towards the end of his first-round match in Paris he was already looking at his box agitated. He appeared physically shaken and exhausted," Srinath said.

In south-west London, where Sinner begins his title defence against Miomir Kecmanovic on Monday under a pleasant sky and temperatures are not expected to top 24°C, he should have little trouble teeing off. Yet match play is a different matter from practice.

AFP

TEMPS UP! Jannik Sinner

"In practice you might hit 500 balls, but it is a structured, predictable drill," Srinath, now a coach, explained. "You can anticipate and control the movement. And then if one is tired, we manage the load, intensity and the volume. But in a match, your shot making is explosive, never mind if it is five or 500 balls. It involves maximum effort."

Sinner himself acknowledged the gap between training and competition. "Of course you cannot simulate 100 % what you feel in a match. We did some changes (after Paris), I won't say big changes. I believe in details. We are happy at the moment with what we are doing, but the result we're not going to see here. It's a long process, there's no magic."

Yash Pandey, a high-performance sports physio with the Indian Davis Cup team, agrees. The Italian, who has never won a match lasting longer than three hours and 50-minutes and holds a 6-12 record in five-set matches, will nonetheless be pushed to take the scenic route if he is to go deep into the tournament.

"This is going to be a process for him," Pandey said, adding that despite the concerns surrounding the Italian, he remains the favourite. "He knows too that the only way he's going to lose is because of his fitness. I don't see anybody else right now, unless somebody comes out really strong on a particular day. It can happen, but Sinner is the player to beat."

The conversation around No. 1s and their fragility does not end with Sinner. Aryna Sabalenka's startling collapse from a winning position in her Roland Garros quarter-final suggests that even tennis' most physically imposing players may be operating closer to the edge than it appears, even when in complete control of a match.

While Sinner's issue appears physical, Sabalenka's seems more mental. The 28-year-old revealed that, after Roland Garros, she spoke again with a psychologist she had previously worked with, feeling it was the right step at this stage of her season.

"I feel like I need someone to throw all of my thoughts out to clear my head a little bit ahead of a big tournament," she said. "I have my team, we chat a lot. Sometimes you have things that you don't want to throw at your team. It's really important to have someone you can talk to and you can feel safe with."

Curtain call: Big Ben calls it a day

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As Ben Stokes' retirement announcement was being made official at Trent Bridge on a blazing Sunday afternoon, the crowd stood up and started cheering. The England captain, at the top of his bowling mark, stopped for a moment, showed no reaction and charged in. And what resulted seemed surreal.

A tiring Stokes induced a nick off New Zealand batter Zak Foulkes' bat and the second slip Harry Brook com-

END OF AN ERA

pleted a catch, the team celebrating as if there's no tomorrow. The cheer across the ground turned into an eruption of emotion — a celebration of England's greatest all-rounder after Ian Botham and the best world cricket has seen since Jacques Kallis.

Stokes was coming back from a one-match ban following a bar brawl in this Test match. On the morning of Day 4, he had told his team-

Reuters

mates that this would be his last Test, saying "reasons can wait for another day". Playing only one format, one felt Stokes was good enough for a few more years of Test cricket. But it wasn't to be.

Probably, this latest controversy was the last straw in a career that has had its share of troubles — he was once banned in 2017 after a bar brawl in Bristol. Injuries, too, had taken a severe toll on his body, Stokes was often forced to take breaks in the past few years.

An all-format matchwinner, an ODI and T20 World Cup winner, scorer of one of the greatest Ashes centuries of all time, Stokes had achieved everything. But numbers can't explain Stokes — the 35-year-old was way more than that. He was an iconoclast, a player who could face fire with fire.

His 135 against Australia at Headingley, taking his team to a miraculous one-wicket win will always be remembered as one of the greatest Test innings ever played. Playing with No. 11, the attack that he launched on Australia was a turning point for English cricket.

It wasn't one-off. Every time in England were in trouble, Stokes seemed to rise, be it during the ODI World Cup final win in Lord's in 2019 or the 2022 T20 World Cup final triumph against Pakistan in Melbourne. Stokes was everywhere, guiding England through choppy waters.

With Stokes deciding to move on, it's to be seen how England approach their Test cricket going forward.

Brief scores: New Zealand: 438 & **288/9 decl (o/n: 120/3) in 94 overs** (Ravindra 94, Mitchell 100 n.o; Archer 4-53; Gus Atkinson 2-50, Ben Stokes 2-49) vs **England 354 & 103/4 in 15 overs** (Ben Duckett 36, Ben Stokes 30; Zak Foulkes 3-42)

Ireland humble T20 world champs

Belfast: Jai Moondra, a software engineer from Rajasthan's Tonk, rocked a star-studded batting lineup filled with IPL stars as Ireland did the unthinkable, shocking reigning T20 World Champions India by one-run to complete a historic 2-0 series win here on Sunday.

It is easily the greatest moment in Irish cricket since Kevin O'Brien's epochal century when they beat England in the 2011 ODI World Cup. But humbling of the mighty India will certainly be at a different level for them. In a slightly nippy, blustery conditions, Moondra (3/32) removed Sanju Samson (0), Abhishek Sharma (0) for first-ball ducks with icing on the cake being skipper Shreyas Iyer's wicket.

2ND T20I

India managed only 153/9, chasing 155 at the Stormont ground on an eventful Sunday, after the hosts made 154/8.

Towards the end, Harshit Rana (21) tried his best before being dismissed off the penultimate delivery of the match. The series defeat also put a stop to India's 16 T20I series winning streak that started mid 2023.

AP

STUNNING SHOW: Jai Moondra

Under head coach Gautam Gambhir, Indian men's cricket team has achieved some embarrassing firsts. After a home 0-3 whitewash in Tests against New Zealand in 2024 and a first ODI series defeat against New Zealand in early 2026, getting completely annihilated by a minnow is one of the lowest ebbs that one could have hit. Once it became 19/3, it was always a catch-up game for India. With Vaibhav Sooryavanshi breathing down his neck, Samson recorded his second successive first-ball duck against Moondra, who got one to shape in.

Three balls later, Abhishek, got a delivery bowled on hard length outside the off-stump and the southpaw's wild swig resulted in Matt Hollard running back from his short third-man position to grab the catch.

Moondra slipped a stock left-armer's delivery that was pushed in with the angle and he got an inside edge onto the stumps playing away from his body. Ishan Kishan (12) was back due to a brilliant direct throw by Ross Adair that found him way short of the crease. Earlier, debutant Prince gave an impressive account of himself with three scalps as India restricted Ireland to 154/8.

Brief scores: Ireland 154/8 in 20 overs (Harry Tector 53, Ben Calitz 37; Arshdeep Singh 2-35, Prince Yadav 3-22, Shivam Dube 2-25) bt **India: 153/9 in 20 overs** (Tilak Varma 55; Jai Moondra 3-32, Matt Hollard 3-26). PTI

Fifty for Padikkal in drawn game

Galle: Devdutt Padikkal hit a patient fifty in India A's second innings as the opening Test against Sri Lanka A ended in a tame draw with weather disrupting the proceedings on the fourth and final day here on Sunday.

Resuming their second innings at 48 for no loss, Padikkal made 67 off 101 balls with the help of five boundaries, while Ayush Pandey (38) and Harsh Dubey (29) also made

UNOFFICIAL TEST

useful contributions as India 'A' declared their second innings 189/8 in 57 overs, setting Sri Lanka 'A' a target of 312.

Left-arm spinner Dilum Sudeera scalped five wickets for 49 runs for Sri Lanka 'A' in India A's second innings. In the pursuit, Sri Lanka 'A' managed 70/2 in 15 overs with rain halting the play for a significant amount of time. **Brief scores: India 'A': 452/6 decl** & **189/8 decl** (Devdutt Padikka 67; Dilum Sudeera 5/49) drew with **Sri Lanka 'A': 330** & **70/2 in 15 overs**. PTI

Coastal Kings prevail

Hubballi: Coastal Kings Mangaluru defeated Shivamogga Yodhas by eight wickets via the VJD method in the Maharaja Trophy on Sunday. Rain reduced the match to 17 overs per side. Asked to bat at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium, the Yodhas once again failed to fire as they were restricted to 113/8 in 17 overs. Skipper Luvnith Sisodia top-scored with a 28-ball 35 as six batters registered single-digit scores.

MAHARAJA TROPHY

Medium pacer V Koushik (2/15) set the ball rolling with a double blow in his second over, while 17-year-old debutant BR Rathan (3/16) led the attack with a three-wicket haul. In reply, Coastal Kings chased down the target in 12.4 overs for the loss of two wickets. Openers Venkatesh M and Nikin Jose laid the foun-

DREAM DEBUT: BR Rathan

dation for a comfortable win with an opening partnership of 81 off 47 deliveries. Venkatesh scored 45 off 26 balls, while Nikin made 31 off 25 balls. While Coastal Kings clinched their third win in five matches, Yodhas fell to their second successive defeat and fourth loss in five games. **Brief scores: Shivamogga Yodhas 113/8** (Luvnith Sisodia 35, Harshil 28; V Koushik 2-15, BR Rathan 3-16) lost to **Coastal Kings Mangaluru 118/2 in 12.4 overs** (Venkatesh M 45, Nikin Jose 31; Bheem Navale 2-24). TNN

RUSSELL TRIUMPHS

Spielberg (Austria): A thirsty George Russell won the Austrian Grand Prix from pole position on Sunday to trim Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli's Formula One lead to 40 points. Max Verstappen finished 1.6 seconds adrift, after crashing in qualifying and starting fifth, at his Red Bull team's home circuit with Antonelli third and 0.3 behind after a thrilling chase to the line at scenic Spielberg. The win was Russell's second of the season, after he took the opener in Australia, his career seventh and Mercedes' seventh in eight rounds so far. Antonelli has 171 points to Russell's 131 with Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton, fifth on Sunday after running second and battling Verstappen wheel-to-wheel, dropping to third on 125. In the constructors' standings, Mercedes have 302 points to Ferrari's 204. REUTERS

'Ancy can breach 7m mark'

▶ Continued From Page 1

Father Sojan said, "I am living my dream through my daughter. I could not progress because we didn't have the facilities to train. But here she is now..."

Ancy hails from Nattika's lower-income Syrian Christian

ATHLETICS

community. Money was scarce. "We are not financially well off," said Sanoj, "Our income depends on how much I earn from driving my auto-rickshaw. Right now, I am recovering from an injury, so it has affected our earnings."

"This record is dedicated to my father," Ancy said in Bhubaneswar, "He would often say that we didn't have any record at the national level in the family. For him, this is a reward for all the trust he placed in me and all the sacrifices he made over the years." Sanoj first realised Ancy's potential when she was a teen. "At the U-14 State School Games in 2015, Ancy jumped to 4.93 m to win bronze. It was remarkable considering she was 13 and tiny," he recalled. Sojan reckoned that his daughter is yet to reach her full potential. "She needs to improve her jump and holding time. But I'm proud of her. She can now breach the 7m mark," he added. Sanoj agreed. "I believe she can cross the 7-m barrier," he said. Anju Bobby George knows it will happen. "I am proud of her. Long jump has always been a Malayalee speciality. Proud that a Keralite broke my record," Anju said. TNN

Rohit sets meet record

Arnab.Seal@timesofindia.com

Bhubaneswar: Just when it seemed that the 65th National Inter-State Athletics Championships would end on a subdued note, men's javelin thrower Rohit Yadav and long jumper Murali Sreeshankar lit up the Kalinga Stadium here on Sunday.

Rohit produced a massive 87.05m throw in his final attempt to not only clinch gold and qualify for Asian Games but also set a new meet record. The effort is the best by an Indian this year and currently ranks as the second-best throw in the world in 2026, behind only Sri Lanka's Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage, who hurled the javelin 92.62m at the Diamond League in Rome earlier this month.

Sreeshankar, whose first three jumps measured 8.06m, 8.00m and 8.21m, produced a best of 8.38m in his fourth attempt. It was not only the second-best jump of his career but, more importantly, his best since suffering a career-threatening injury in 2024.

SILVER FOR SUPRIYA

With a leap of 1.80m, Karnataka's Supriya B bagged silver in the women's high jump. The state 4x400m men's (3:09.51) and women's (3:36.18) relay teams also won silver. Shailesh Kushwaha (30:23.13) bagged bronze in the men's 10,000m. Karnataka ended the competition with 15 medals, including three gold.

Results (Karnataka only): Women: High jump: 2. Supriya B (1.80m); **4x400 relay:** 2. Sinchal, Poovamma Raju, Vijayakumari GK, Priya Mohan (3:36.18). **Men: 10,000m:** 3. Shailesh Kushwaha (30:23.13); **4x400 relay:** 2. A Kashyapa, Theerthesh Shetty, Mijo Kurian, Yashas (3:09.51).

Reiko wins CM's Cup

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: John-trained Reiko — ridden by Neeraj Rawal — won the Chief Minister's Cup at the summer races here on Sunday.

1. The Littleover Plate 1200M: Preview 1, Calix 2, Sai Princess 3, Charming Prospect 4, 2l, 1-1/2l, Snkl. T: 1:12.68. Tote: Rs 35 (W). 10, 11, 49 (P). Fc: Rs 68. Q: Rs 22. Shp: Rs 30. Thp: Rs 105. Trinalla: Rs 917 & 872. Exacta: Rs 5067 & 1303.
2. The Mahalakshmi Plate 1600M: Michiko 1, Sea Diamond 2, Rising Form 3, Magna Carta 4, 4-1/4l, 1/2l, 3l. T: 1:39.79. Tote: Rs 17 (W). 12, 13, 51 (P). Fc: Rs 70. Q: Rs 49. Shp: Rs 33. Thp: Rs 115. Trinalla: Rs 1013 & 634. Exacta: Rs 1217 & 347.
3. The Richelieu Stakes 1400M: Steely Challenge 1, Queendom 2, Lightning Blitz 3, Mericle Beauty 4, Not Run: Lots Of Luck. 4-3/4l, 5-1/4l, 6-1/2l. T: 1:24.54. Tote: Rs 16 (W). 10, 14, 11 (P). Fc: Rs 73. Q: Rs 44. Shp: Rs 40. Thp: Rs 29. Trinalla: Rs 93 & 34. Exacta: Rs 492 & 453.
4. The Chief Minister's Cup 1200M: Reiko 1, Dream Seller 2, Crown Drive 3, Kalamitsi 4. 3/4l, Lnk, Hd. T: 1:11.21. Tote: Rs 22 (W). 10, 13 (P). Fc: Rs 41. Q: Rs 18. Shp: Rs 27. Thp: Rs 33. Trinalla: Rs 136 & 83. Exacta: Rs 357 & 60.
5. The Karnataka Sub-area Cup 1400M: Vegatha 1, Lux Aeterna 2, Victoria Doresaani 3, Irish Coffee 4, Not Run: Gachchhatu. 3/4l, 3-1/4l, 2l. T: 1:23.65. Tote: Rs 16 (W). 10, 12, 12 (P). Fc: Rs 61. Q: Rs 47. Shp: Rs 34. Thp: Rs 27. Trinalla: Rs 183 & 56. Exacta: Rs 840 & 784.
6. The Tudor Jet Plate 1200M: River Deep 1, Carat Love 2, Noble Cause 3, Il Volo 4, 1-1/2l, 1-1/2l, Ns. T: 1:12.98. Tote: Rs 23 (W). 11, 13, 15 (P). Fc: Rs 70. Q: Rs 34. Shp: Rs 37. Thp: Rs 49. Trinalla: Rs 157 & 72. Exacta: Rs 233 & 93.
7. The Desert God Plate 1600M: Imperador 1, Regal Aristocracy 2, Pledge 3, Absolute Thunder 4, 1-1/4l, 1-1/4l, 5-3/4l. T: 1:37.09. Tote: Rs 61 (W). 15, 14, 15 (P). Fc: Rs 330. Q: Rs 103. Shp: Rs 43. Thp: Rs 49. Trinalla: Rs 539 & 103. Exacta: Rs 1101 & 688.
Jackpot: Rs 1177. **Runner-up:** Rs 70.
Mini Jackpot: Rs 667. **First Treble:** Rs 84.
Second Treble: Rs 246.

Bhuvan, Prathyush power Vultures

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Bhuvan Gowda (157 n.o.) and Prathyush Shetty (5/13) starred for Vultures Cricket Club, who scored a 278-run victory over Whirlwind Cricketers in the KSCA U-19 inter-club tournament here recently.

On the back of Bhuvan's 163-ball knock, which was laced with14 fours and three sixes, Vultures posted 336/1 in 50 overs. After opener Atharv Malviya (81) laid a solid foundation, Bhuvan combined with Eashan A (66 n.o.) for an unbeaten 154-run second-wicket stand to end the innings on a high.

In reply, Whirlwind lost wickets in a canter and were reduced to 14/5 in the sixth over. They were eventually bundled out for a paltry 58 in 18.3 overs, courtesy Prathyush's fine spell. Mokhit KS (3/23) accounted for three wickets.

Brief scores: Vultures CC: 336/1 in 50 overs (Atharv 81, Bhuvan Gowda N 157 n.o. (162b, 14 x 4, 3 x 6), Eashan A 66 n.o bt **Whirlwind Cricketers: 58 all out in 18.3 overs** (Sai Kritin Yedidi 2-17, Prathyush Shetty 5-13, Mokhit KS 3-23).
Bangalore SC: 24/0 in 2.3 overs bt South End SC: 21 all out in 15.3 overs (Krishna 5-4, Arush Jain 5-14). **Caravan Cricketers: 237 all out in 50 overs** (Preetam Chimmalagi 35, Gaurav R Reddy 40, Navneeth V Raj 63; Amogh Srinivas 2-38, Arnav Mewundi 3-54, Diganth K 2-18) bt **Herons CC: 208 all out in 43.3 overs** (Adyant E 57, Niraj V 30, Diganth K 48 n.o; Nikhil DP 3-31, Parth Patel 3-38, Navneeth Raj 3-41). **Friends Union CC(1): 225 all out in 47.2 overs** (Rachit Das 34, Rishikesh Sharma 48, Dhruv Modhe 73; Skanda 4-29, Pratyush Chauhan 2-52, Daivik S 2-24) bt **The Bangalore Cricketers: 187/9 in 43.2 overs** (Rishik A 37, Namish P 27, Dharsh MD 57 n.o; Veeresh KC 5-24, Dhruv Modhe 3-34).
Wilson Garden CC: 142 all out in 34 overs (Sujaybhushan Patil 44 n.o; Raghav Vadher 2-34, Vishwesh Alagundagi 2-15) lost to **Rajajinagar Cricketers: 146/2 in 14.2 overs** (Prabhav Pydah 27, Abhiraj S 71 n.o, Niranjan Ashok 39 n.o., Sebastien KK 2-40).
Bharath CC: 230 all out in 49.4 overs (Vedant Kumar 41, Aadrith 73, Shreyas Subramanya 40; Sujan Lakshmaiah 3-41, Chirag Ma 4-28) bt **Freelancers CC: 185 all out in 29.3 overs** (SM Bhavanth 26, KA Aayush 105 (61b, 11 x 4, 6 x 6); Samarth Patil 4-35, Mohammed Luqman 2-32, K Pranav 2-34).
Friends Union CC (2): 188 all out in 47.2 overs (Bandhav Raju 26, Shrehaan Chauhan 25, Siddhanth Vasu 26, Srinivas Yadav 26; Ashitharya 2-36, Keerthan Shenoy 4-32) lost to **Jayanagar United Cricketers: 189/5 in 31 overs** (Shivaprasad S 67, Ekansh Roul 40, Rajarshi Mitra 31; Bandhav G Raju 2-35, Siddhanth Vasu 2-52).
Blue Diamond Cricketers: 133 all out in 35 overs (Tanish RC 51; Sidhanth Sunil 2-23, Purushotham Raghu 4-25) lost to **Social Cricketers: 135/1 in 21.3 overs** (Amruthraj T 50, Rithvik H 76 n.o).
RVCE Gymkhana: 169 all out in 49 overs (Karthik HN 38; Sunny Kanchi 4-35, Naveen Reddy 3-27, Aaditya Khilare 2-26) bt **Young Lions Club: 36 all out in 21.5 overs** (Adhithyan S 5-15, Mohammad Attar 2-17, Ayush Kumar 3-4).
Palar SC, Kolar: 270 all out in 47.5 overs (Chiranth D 29, Krithin B 26, Rathin Sanjay R 69, Leshan S 39, Charan S Reddy 36; Jeevan C 3-28, Krishang Rao 2-36, Leelakrishna Pedapudi 3-28) bt **Sapphire Cricket Club: 121 all out in 25.3 overs** (Jeevan SK 26; Athreya M 2-24, S Pratham Raj 6-38).
City Gymkhana: 346/5 in 50 overs (Vismai PM 79, Siddhanth Smaran 110 (86b, 16 x 4, 1 x 6), Arsh Arora 49, Barath C 77 n.o; Badrinath 2-41) bt **Wadiyar CC: 185 all out in 43.5 overs** (Harikrishna Sivakumar 46, Badrinath 66; Gaurav Venkatesh 2-18, P Jayanth Abhiram 2-50, Krushna Rao 2-49, Nihal H 2-20).

Sheetal shines for Hammonds

Bengaluru: Sheetal Santosh (208 n.o; 79 b) stole the show as Hammonds CC cruised to a 283-run victory over Neptune CC in the KSCA U-15 women's T30 tournament in here recently. Opting to bat, Hammonds lost Sahithya BP in the third over. But opener Tamanna Kumar (100, 68b, 14x4) and Sheetal,

U-15 WOMEN'S T30

who hit 25 fours and 11 sixes, looked in fine form as the duo added an unbeaten 311-run second-wicket partnership to power them to 335/1 in 25 overs.

In reply, Neptune were restricted to 52/8 in 25 overs, with Lekisha Kumar and Samruddi Nayak scalping two wickets apiece.

Brief scores: Hammonds CC: 335/1 in 25 overs (Tamanna Kumar 100 n.o (68b, 14x4), Sheetal Santosh 208 n.o, (79b, 25x4, 11x6) bt **Neptune CC: 52/8 in 25 overs** (Lekisha Kumar 2-3, Samruddi Nayak 2-4). (Match delayed, reduced to 25 overs per side). **Swastic Union CC (2): 114/1 in 12 overs** (Yashika Gowda 79 n.o) bt **Young Lions Club: 43 all out in 11.5 overs** (Maria Francica 3-5, Ganavi R 2-4, Triakashi Singh 2-6, Fancy Mahanta 2-9). (Match delayed, reduced to 12 overs per side).
Engrades CC: 163/6 in 29 overs (Vaishnavi Hosalli 38, Monali Gowda 29; Antara Mishra 2-25) bt **Palar SC, Kolar: 138/6 in 29 overs** (Chinthana HR 35; Vaishnavi 2-13). (Match delayed, reduced to 29 overs per side).
Vijaya CC: 235 for no loss in 27 overs (Avni 126 n.o (97b, 6 x 4); Chandana Amoji 90 n.o) bt **Wilson Garden CC: 18 all out in 12.5 overs** (Aarna Mehrotra 4-2, Dhrutih Shastry 2-1). **Dooravani Cricketers (1): 183/2 in 30 overs** (M Loukya 68, Aadhya Patil 68) bt **Herons CC: 134/6 in 23.1 overs** (Mahathi Bhaskar 75; Sinchana G 2-17, M Loukya 2-26). (Match interrupted by rain, no further play was possible). **Yankees CC: 74 all out in 25.3 overs** (Lochana G 2-12, Pranati R 2-10) lost to **Sir Syed Cricketers: 75/2 in 12.5 overs** (Anagha A 35 n.o). **Bharath CC: 212/7 in 25 overs** (U Dhisha 49 n.o; Jeevika 3-30, Sarah Khanum 2-11) bt **Modern CC: 82/6 in 15 overs.** TNN

NANJAPPA ELECTED PRESIDENT

CP Nanjappa was elected the president of the Karnataka Golf Association at the AGM and elections held over the weekend. Roopa Pratap was elected the captain. **Office-bearers: President:** CP Nanjappa, **Captain:** Roopa Pratap, **Secretary:** Hari R Achanta, **Treasurer:** Devaiah S Thennira. **MC:** Ashok Gowda, Girish Panth, AS Kumaran, Prashanth C, JM Swamy. TNN

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THE TIMES

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FIFA

"THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL IS A SAD VOYAGE FROM BEAUTY TO DUTY" **Eduardo Galeano**

They were 48. After 72 games played over 18 days, 32 remain. Now, it's the knock-outs. You win, you stay alive. You lose, you go home. The real World Cup 2026 has just begun

FROM BOYS TO MEN

ARGENTINA'S CHANCES SURGE IN NEW TOI ONLINE POLL

Who Will Win World Cup 2026?

Readers' prediction on **June 10**

Readers' prediction on **June 28**

Which Unlikely Team Has Impressed Most?

Cabo Verde **60%**
DR Congo **19%**
Iran **12%**
Curacao **9%**

Which Team Has Disappointed Most?

Turkiye **45%**
Czechia **36%**
Tunisia **10%**
Iraq **9%**

THE KNOCKOUTS

All Timings In IST

June 29, Monday: South Africa vs Canada, 12:30am | Brazil vs Japan, 10:30pm

June 30, Tuesday: Germany vs Paraguay, 2:00am | Netherlands vs Morocco, 6:30am | Ivory Coast vs Norway, 10:30pm

July 1, Wednesday: France vs Sweden, 2:30am | Mexico vs Ecuador, 6:30am | England vs DR Congo, 9:30pm

July 2, Thursday: Belgium vs Senegal, 1:30am | United States vs Bosnia & Herzegovina, 5:30am

July 3, Friday: Spain vs Austria, 12:30am | Portugal vs Croatia, 4:30am | Switzerland vs Algeria, 8:30am | Australia vs Egypt, 11:30pm

July 4, Saturday: Argentina vs Cabo Verde, 3:30am | Colombia vs Ghana, 7:00am

WC 2026: THE STORY IN STATISTICS

TEAMS

HIGHEST GOAL SCORING TEAM
Germany, Netherlands, France: **10 each**

HIGHEST GOAL ATTEMPTS
Belgium: **73**

HIGHEST PASSING ACCURACY:
Spain: **92%**

HIGHEST RED CARDS:
South Africa/Qatar: **2**

HIGHEST YELLOW CARDS
Paraguay, Curacao, Haiti: **7 each**

HIGHEST GOALS CONCEDED
Iraq and Tunisia: **12 each**

MAXIMUM DISTANCE COVERED
(Most Hardworking Team):
US: **358.6km**

Do You Know? Turkiye has the second highest goal attempts, 70, yet finished last in their group and were knocked out. **Moral of the story:** Finishing well is fundamental to success both in football and life

PLAYERS

BEST PASSING ACCURACY
Pau Cubarsi (Spain): **99%**

MAXIMUM FOULS COMMITTED
Andres Cubas (Paraguay): **11**

Youngest Player In Knock-Outs: Gilberto Mora, Mexican midfielder, not yet 18

Oldest Player In Knock-Outs: Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, 41 years young

MAXIMUM DISTANCE COVERED (Most Hardworking Player)
Noor Alrawabdeh (Jordan)
38.6km

HIGHEST NUMBER OF ASSISTS
Bruno Guimaraes, Michael Olise, Alexander Isak: **3 each**

Do You Know? At the age of 40 years and 291 days, **Luka Modric of Croatia** became the oldest ever player to provide an assist against Ghana at the World Cup

MAX GOALKEEPING SAVES:
ELOY ROOM (CURACAO)
21

Do You Know? With his header against Panama, **Harry Kane** has become England's all-time highest scorer at the World Cup with 11 goals. He overtook Gary Linekar (10)

COUNTRY CLUB

Clubs With Maximum Players In Rd 32

Manchester City	18	Crystal Palace	12
Bayern Münich	16	Atlético De Madrid	11
Arsenal	15	Borussia Dortmund	10
Paris Saint-Germain	14	Liverpool	10
Barcelona	14	AC Milan	10

No. Of Footballers In Rd 32 Playing For Clubs There

England	162	US	29
Germany	93	Portugal	26
Spain	79	Brazil	25
France	73	Belgium	24
Italy	63	Netherlands	21

QUIZ

1. In which country were the WC footballs manufactured? | **2.** Other than they are footballers and have all scored at least three goals in the World Cup, what's common to Matheus Cunha, Romelu Lukaku, Marcus Rashford and Robin van Persie? | **3.** Which country hasn't conceded a goal in the first half of a World Cup game since 2014. Clue: It has never won the World Cup? | **4.** My name is Josimar Jose Evora Dias. But you probably know me by another name. Who am I? | **5.** Do you recognize me?

Answers: **1.** Pakistan **2.** They have all played for Manchester United **3.** Mexico **4.** Vozinha, Cabo Verde goalie **5.** Sarpreet Singh of NZ

How You Fared: **(5):** You are the GOAT of WC quizzers. **(3-4):** You are like the Brazil of recent years. Good, but not great. **(1-2):** You love the game, but are more into club football **(0):** Cricket is your poison, right?

Text: Avijit Ghosh | Stats: FIFA, TIG

Pix: AFP, AP

STUDENT RISES TO TEST THE SENSEI

Japan's meeting with Brazil brings to the fore a spiritual link of philosophy, guidance and deep respect

Saumyajit.Basu@timesofindia.com

RETURNING FROM INJURIES: Brazil's Neymar (left) and Japan's Takefusa Kubo

There used to be a popular saying in Brazil: "Zico did not win a World Cup. Well, too bad for the World Cup."

"If I'm considered the king of football, then without doubt, the prince is Zico," Pele had once said.

Yet, Zico, much-feted and loved at home, left Brazil in 1991 on a journey to the farthest corner of the globe. The Land of the Rising Sun was seeking a master to show it's football philosophy and project the right guidance. Zico's influence invigorated Japanese football, helping set the country on the path to its maiden World Cup appearance in 1998. They have never missed the tournament since.

The Blue Samurai's winner-takes-all Round of 32 clash against Brazil in Houston on Monday, assumes an added dimension as Zico, the sensei of Japanese football, issues a stern warning for the Selecao. The Brazilian great, widely regarded as a pioneer of football in the Asian nation, could be excused for divided loyalties. So too could the 2.5 million Brazilians of Japanese ancestry. "I'll be supporting Brazil. After all, I am Brazilian," Zico told FIFA, after the match-ups were drawn. "But if Japan wins, so be it."

ZICO

The match will be only the second meeting between Brazil and Japan at a World Cup. Their only previous encounter came 20 years ago, on the final matchday of the 2006 group stage in Germany. Brazil ran out 4-1 winners and the man in charge of Japan was none other than Zico himself.

"Japan is at a more competitive level now. Of their 26 players at the World Cup, 23 play in Europe," Zico noted, "Of the three who play at home, two are goalkeepers and the other is Yuto Nagatomo. He's there more as a leader and experienced figure within the squad. It's his fifth World Cup."

Brazil is home to the largest population of people of Japanese descent outside of Japan. Together with Zico's enduring bond with the country, that demographic link adds a unique historical flavour every time the Blues meet the Yellows.

After successful spells with Flamengo, Udinese, and Brazil, Zico came out of retirement to play for Sumitomo Metal — later renamed as the exotic sounding and wildly popular Kashima Antlers — from 1991 to 1994, helping shape Japan's fledgling professional game. He later managed Kashima in the J-League and now serves as a technical adviser at the club. Kashima Antlers even erected a statue to Zico, commemorating his contribution to Japanese football as a teacher. At the Maracana, he is celebrated as a player — the conjuror of beautiful evenings for Flamengo and the Selecao. They still chant his name most lovingly, even when Germany play a young France, as happened at the 2014 World Cup. Zico also coached Japan from 2002 to 2006, winning the 2004 Asian Cup and guiding them to the 2006 World Cup.

Round of 32
BRAZIL VS JAPAN
10:30 pm (Mon) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

Japan's progress on the world stage has been steady ever since. At each of the last two World Cups they reached the knockout stage but fell short of the quarterfinals. On both occasions, their elimination denied the football world a long-awaited meeting with Brazil in the next round.

Back in 2022, they stunned perennial powerhouses Germany, coached by Joachim Loew, and Spain, managed by Luis Enrique, in the group stage. Now, the occasion presents the student with an opportunity to push the mentor to his limits.

Not that the two nations are strangers on the international stage. As recently as October 2025, Japan earned their first-ever victory over Carlo Ancelotti's Brazil, albeit in a friendly.

It was still early days for Ancelotti, who had inherited a disjointed side, but the scar will not be forgotten easily. "Perhaps ... they will be even more motivated," Japan manager Hajime Moriyasu said. "We will be playing against a Brazil side that is very keen to win."

On Monday, the circle will be complete.

The teacher who helped shape modern Japanese football will watch as his finest pupils attempt to show that they had learned from the best.

Dutch wary of Morocco's familiar touch

STAR ATTACK: Morocco's Ismael Saibari

Monterrey: Star-laden Morocco and the Netherlands have the potential to produce a riveting Round of 32 tie at the World Cup, underpinned by a societal subtext that adds a healthy spice to the game in Monterrey on Monday.

There is a large degree of familiarity, even if the countries have only played each other three times in the past, with Morocco having three Dutch-born players in their side and their top scorer here, Ismael Saibari, playing at PSV Eindhoven.

Morocco have drawn extensively on Dutch expertise over the last decade to build a team which reached the semifinals at the last World Cup and have again impressed by finishing in second place behind Brazil in Group C but only on goal difference.

Morocco amassed seven points, beating Scotland and Haiti, and played with more pressing intensity and intelligent movement to suggest they are going to be hard to overcome. "I'm not sure if we're the favourites in the match against Morocco. It's a good team with a lot of quality and they can score easily," Dutch coach Ronald Koeman said after his side topped Group F on Thursday with a win over Tunisia.

Round of 32
NETHERLANDS VS MOROCCO
6:30 am (Tuesday) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

The Netherlands started their World Cup campaign slowly with a draw against Japan but scored five versus Sweden and three against Tunisia and are also looking in good form. They managed 10 goals in their three group games, with Brian Brobbey and Cody Gakpo, who has a knack of scoring at major tournaments, sharing five goals between them. "There are players who love to get on the ball. I've got a group of lads that work really well together and have a great team spirit," added Koeman, who was captain of the team when the Dutch beat Morocco at the 1994 World Cup in Orlando.

There is a large Moroccan community in the Netherlands, estimated last year at 430,000, and footballers of Moroccan heritage are prominent in the Dutch game.

Ibrahim Afellay and Khalid Boulahrouz were in the squad when the Netherlands finished runners-up at the 2010 World Cup but other Dutch-born players have chosen to represent Morocco. Morocco's squad at this World Cup has Sofyan Amrabat, Noussair Mazraoui and PSV fullback Anass Salah-Eddine, who played for the Netherlands at under-21 level before switching his international allegiance last year. AGENCIES

Faltering stars are Germany's concern ahead of Paraguay tie

Boston: Germany will need to up their game in their World Cup round of 32 against Paraguay or risk going home, with their top players yet to peak at the tournament and expectations back home of a deep run in the competition piling pressure on the team.

The four-time world champions came into the World Cup on a nine-match winning run and demolished Curacao 7-1 in their Group E opener before snatching a stoppage-time win against Ivory Coast to secure top spot and a place in the knockout stage for the first time in 12 years.

They came into the tournament on the back of first-round exits in the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and looked set for a 12th straight win before a shock 2-1 loss to Ecuador in their last group match snapped their streak and instantly raised alarm bells among their fans.

It also cast doubts over coach Julian Nagelsmann's pre-tournament confidence they could go all the way.

Their biggest names in the squad -- Florian Wirtz, Jamal Musiala and Kai Havertz -- have so far failed to live up to expectations, delivering largely below-par performances, especially in the last two matches. Substitute Deniz Undav is Germany's top scorer with three goals so far.

"To reach the very big goals we know the players, who have developed into world-class players in the past couple of years, they have to deliver. That's clear. The players know there is room for improvement," Germany team director Rudi Voeller said in a press conference on Saturday. "We have to go to the limit."

Asked when the trio was expected to hit top form, Voeller said it would happen soon. "You have the feeling that this moment is near. Not much is missing for them to spark."

Round of 32
GERMANY VS PARAGUAY
2 am (Tuesday) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

Paraguay, who advanced as one of the eight best third-place finishers at the expanded 48-team tournament, will be a hard nut to crack.

After a 4-1 opening loss to co-hosts United States, they stunned Turkey 1-0 before a goalless draw against Australia on Friday booked their spot in the knockout stage.

With a defensive resilience that earned them two consecutive clean sheets and a highly physical game, underdogs Paraguay will look to soak up pressure and hit the Germans on the break.

"Recovering from such a hard result (against the US team) was really hard for us, and in spite of that, our team has been very solid in the past two games," Paraguay coach Gustavo Alfaro said. "We will now recover in order to have all the players ready for the next match." REUTERS

GAKPO REQUESTS PRIVACY AFTER THE DEATH OF UNBORN CHILD

Kansas City: Netherlands forward Cody Gakpo has asked for "privacy and space" following the announcement by his partner Noa van der Bij that they had lost their unborn son. Van der Bij posted a picture on Instagram of the pair holding hands over a blanket and knitted hat.

"With broken hearts, we share the devastating news that our baby boy passed away during pregnancy," she wrote.

"Thank you for your love and support. Elijah Raphael Gakpo. Forever loved. Forever our son."

In a post of his own, Liverpool forward Gakpo, who is on World Cup duty, wrote: "This is an incredibly difficult time for our family. "We kindly ask for our privacy and space. Thank you for your understanding."

SCOTLAND COACH LEAVES DESPITE NEW CONTRACT

Charlotte N.C.: Scotland coach Steve Clarke is stepping down after the team was eliminated from the World Cup even though he signed a new four-year contract only a month before.

Clarke announced he was leaving in an emotional letter to Scotland's "Tartan Army" supporters shortly after Croatia's 2-1 win over Ghana on Saturday ensured Scotland were knocked out. His seven years in charge saw Scotland reach its first World Cup since 1998 and qualify twice for the European Championship, having not done so since 1996. Scotland's players "deserve all the praise and adulation," Clarke wrote.

'URUGUAY BODY CANCELS CHARTER FLIGHT AFTER EXIT'

Montevideo: Uruguay exited the World Cup meekly after the group stage, and the team's exit from North America reportedly didn't go according to plan either. The Uruguayan soccer federation cancelled the squad's scheduled charter flight from the team's training base in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, to the home capital city of Montevideo, according to multiple reports in the Uruguayan media. Instead, the players were left to take commercial flights home.

Ranked No. 16 by FIFA ahead of the World Cup, Uruguay were the top-rated team among those that failed to advance to the round of 32. AGENCIES